

## **Relationship Quality between Parents and Adolescents: Understanding the Role of Religion**

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## ABSTRACT

Melinda Lundquist Denton: Relationship Quality between Parents and Adolescents:  
Understanding the Role of Religion  
(Under the direction of Christian Smith and Lisa D. Pearce)

Adolescence is a time of significant transition and major life changes. In particular, relationships between parents and adolescents are characterized by movement toward increasing adolescent autonomy and renegotiation of parental authority. The relationship between parents and adolescents has been found to be an important contributor to adolescent well-being. Research has linked parent-child relationship quality to a wide variety of adolescent outcomes, including areas such as academic achievement, delinquency and risk behaviors, mental health and well-being, and life satisfaction. Given the significant impact of the parent-adolescent relationship on adolescent outcomes, this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the relationships between adolescents and their parents, with a particular focus on the intersection of religion and parent-child relationships.

The goal of the first chapter is to identify different dimensions of religion and examine how they are related to the quality of relationships between adolescents and their parents. The following two chapters further specify these relationships, first through an examination of the mediating role of social resources in the link between religion and relationship quality, and second through sub-population analysis comparing the role of religion in the parent-child relationships of black and white adolescents.

Taken together, the three chapters that comprise this dissertation lead us to a more comprehensive understanding of religion's role in teenagers' perceptions of their

relationships with their parents. Evidence is provided to further our understanding of religion as a multidimensional social force in family life, to elucidate how religious involvement may confer social resources that improve family relations, and how these patterns may vary within particular cultural contexts. The findings presented here help us better understand the role of the institution of religion in family lives and suggest broader mechanisms of religious influence.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Adolescence is an important and formative stage in the life course, and a wealth of research has been devoted to helping scholars better understand the dynamics of adolescent behavior and the factors associated with adolescent well-being. Popular images of adolescence as a period of rebellion and turbulence have been called into question, with research indicating that the transitional period of adolescence is relatively smooth for the majority of teenagers and their families (Gecas and Seff 1990; Henricson and Roker 2000; Steinberg 2001). Adolescence is, however, a time of significant transition and major life changes. In particular, relationships between parents and adolescents are characterized by movement toward increasing adolescent autonomy and renegotiation of parental authority (Steinberg and Silk 2002; Williams 2003). The shifting boundaries experienced by parents and adolescents, along with changes in other areas of teenagers' lives, can result in increased conflict between parents and their adolescent children (Mahoney 2005; Montmayor 1983). While teenagers and their parents may experience varying degrees of conflict or transition during this period of their relationships, parents continue to provide important resources and support in the lives of adolescents (Williams 2003; Youniss and Smollar 1985).

The relationship between parents and adolescents has been found to be an important contributor to adolescent well-being. Research has linked parent-child relationships to a

wide variety of adolescent outcomes, including areas such as academic achievement, delinquency and risk behaviors, mental health and well-being, and life satisfaction (Aunola, Stattin, and Nurmi 2000; Brody, Stoneman, and Flor 1995; Falci 2006; Manders et al. 2006; Mason and Windle 2001; Ream and Savin-Williams 2005; van Wel, Linssen, and Abma 2000). Much of this research has focused on the impact of parenting behaviors on adolescent outcomes. However, there is a growing recognition of the importance of the quality of the parent-child interactions and accounting for the adolescent perspective in assessing the relationship (Steinberg 2001). Taking into account the changes that take place in the parent-child relationship during adolescence and also the significance of this relationship to the life success and well-being of adolescents, one scholar has concluded that an important goal of parents and adolescents is to maintain positive relationship ties while navigating the transitions in the relationship (Williams 2003). Given the importance of this goal, it seems a worthy endeavor to try to better understand the factors that contribute to positive parent-child relationships.

The following three papers seek to contribute to our understanding of the relationships between adolescents and their parents, with a particular focus on the intersection of religion and parent-child relationships. Similar to parent-teen relationship quality, religion is another factor that has been linked to the well-being of adolescents. In his review of the literature, Regnerus (2003) finds religion to be related to adolescent physical and emotional health, academic outcomes, civic involvement, and volunteerism. In addition, he finds evidence that religion is an integral part of many families, associated with a variety of family-related outcomes. Another recent study finds that family religious activity is positively related to adolescents' reports about their relationships with their parents (Smith and Kim 2003).

These and other studies that explore the intersection of religion and family relationships highlight an area of research that merits continued examination in order to better understand the dynamics of parent-adolescent relationships and the factors that contribute to their success. The papers presented in this dissertation contribute to this conversation about the role of religion in the family lives of adolescents.

The data for all three papers come from the National Survey of Youth and Religion (NSYR), a nationally representative telephone survey of teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, and of one of their parents. These data offer advantages over previous research that allow me to address two important limitations in the existing literature addressing religion among teenagers. First, the NSYR was designed with a particular focus on understanding the religious lives of teenagers. As such, it includes a wide array of religion measures not often found in nationally representative surveys of adolescents. The large number of religion questions makes it possible to move beyond the single indicators that are commonly used to measure the complex concept of religion. Instead, I am able use multiple indicators to construct measures of a range of religious dimensions and to make distinctions between the various mechanisms by which religion operates in the lives of teenagers. Second, the survey includes data about the religious lives of both parents and teenagers. Rather than analyzing religious characteristics of parents as proxies for teenage religion or analyzing teenage religious commitments in the absence of any family religious context, I am able to integrate relationships between parent and teen religious characteristics into my examination of the role of religion in parent-child relationship quality.

The goal of the Chapter Two is to identify different dimensions of religion and examine how they are related to the quality of relationships between adolescents and their parents. In

this chapter, I identify two specific theoretical mechanisms through which religion might be expected to influence family relationships – pro-family moral beliefs and religious solidarity. Guided by these theoretical expectations, I use measures of three distinct dimensions of religion – religious participation, personal religiosity, and religious solidarity – to test several hypotheses about the role of religion in the quality of adolescents’ relationships with their parents.

Chapter Two presents a general model of how we expect that religion might operate in the relationship between religion and parent-child relationship quality. Chapters Three and Four expand on this model by seeking to further specify these relationships, first through an examination of mediating variables and second through sub-population analysis. In Chapter Three, I examine social resources as potential mediators in the association between religion and relationship quality. Drawing on previous theoretical and empirical research regarding social support and social capital, I test the hypothesis that these social resources are mechanisms that might help explain the effect of religion on parent-child relationship quality. In Chapter Four I examine potential race differences in the ways that religion is related to the relationship quality between parents and adolescents. Historical differences in the religious experiences of whites and blacks in the United States raise questions about whether religion operates similarly in the lives of these two groups of adolescents. Using multi-group structural equation models, I examine the relationship between religion and parent-child relationship quality across the white and black adolescents in the sample.

Taken together, the three chapters that comprise this dissertation lead us to a more comprehensive understanding of religion’s role in teenagers’ perceptions of their relationships with their parents. Evidence is provided to further our understanding of religion



as a multidimensional social force in family life, to elucidate how religious involvement may confer social resources that improve family relations, and how these patterns may vary within particular cultural contexts. The findings presented here help us better understand the role of the institution of religion in family lives and suggest broader mechanisms of religious influence that may be transferable strategies for other social and community level institutions.

## CHAPTER II

### Parent-Child Relationship Quality: Exploring the Dimensions of Adolescent Religiosity

Scholars of adolescents have devoted much research to the task of understanding the lives of adolescents and the complex factors that contribute to their well-being. This broad topic is often broken down into more specific questions such as what helps adolescents succeed academically, what factors reduce risk behaviors, what influences promote better health, etc. This chapter seeks to enter into this conversation by exploring the role of religion in the lives of teenagers, and specifically the ways in which religion is related to the quality of adolescents' family relationships.

#### *Relationship Quality*

The quality of relationships between parents and teenagers has been found by many to be one of the significant factors in the life-success of teenagers. Those with stronger relationships with their parents tend to do better in many areas of their lives. According to Demo (1992), the quality of the relationship between parents and their children is a stronger predictor of the overall well-being of children than is family structure. Multiple studies have found the parent-child relationship to be linked to adolescents' self-esteem, life-satisfaction, psychological well-being, adolescent autonomy, and the quality of relationships with friends

(Armsden 1986; Armsden and Greenberg 1987; Cotterell 1992; Greenberg 1983; McCoy, Brody, and Stoneman 1994; Peterson, Bush, and Supple 1999; van Wel, Linssen, and Abma 2000). Others studies have linked the quality of relationships with parents to levels of depression and psychological distress among teenagers (Armsden et al. 1990; Falci 2006; Greenberger and Chen 1996; Lau and Kwok 2000; Papini, Roggman, and Anderson 1991; Sheeber et al. 1997; Tolan et al. 1997); academic outcomes (Clark 1983; Field et al. 1995; Gecas and Seff 1990), pubertal timing (Ellis et al. 1999), dieting and eating problems among female youth (Byely et al. 2000; Maharaj et al. 2001), and attitudes about divorce among male youth (Risch, Jodl, and Eccles 2004).

Family relationships and parental interaction have also been linked to problem behavior among teenagers. (Coley 2003; Dekovic, Buist, and Reitz 2004; Florsheim, Tolan, and Gorman-Smith 1998; Manders et al. 2006; Mason and Windle 2001; Webb and Baer 1995). A recent study by Videon (2002), for instance, found that the quality of relationships between adolescents and their same-sex parents prior to a parental separation had a significant influence on the likelihood of increased delinquency following the separation of the adolescent and the parent due to marital dissolution. Other studies have linked poor quality relationships with parents to increased levels of alcohol consumption (Barnes, Farrell, and Banerjee 1994; Mason and Windle 2001; Webb and Baer 1995) and sexual risk behaviors among adolescents (Huebner and Howell 2003; Ream and Savin-Williams 2005).

Given that the quality of parent-teenager relationships is such a strong factor in determining so many adolescent outcomes, much research has been conducted in an effort to better understand factors influencing the relationships between parents and teenagers. Many factors have been found to contribute to the quality of relationships between parents and

adolescents. Among them are the age and gender of the adolescent (Seiffge-Krenke 1999; Videon 2002); family structure and parental marital status (Demo 1992; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Shapiro and Lambert 1999); the quality of the parental marital relationship (Brody et al. 1994); parenting style (Karavasilis, Doyle, and Markiewicz 2003; Steinberg 2001); socio-economic status (Demo 1992); parental levels of education (Bianchi 2000; Dornbusch 1989; Hilliard 1996); and employment status of mothers and the role strain that is associated with mother employment ( see also Bianchi 2000; Demo 1992).

### *Religion and parent-child relationships*

While all of these variables appear to be important factors in the relationship quality of parents and teenagers, another issue has not been adequately explored. Religion has often been neglected in attempts to understand the quality of parent-child relationships. For very many parents and adolescents in the U.S., religion is an important part of their life, shaping their identity, behaviors, and social relationships. Religious practices and commitments have been shown to influence a wide range of attitudes and behaviors for both adolescents and adults (Regnerus 2003; Sherkat and Ellison 1999). Similarly, we would expect these religious practices and commitments to have some influence in shaping the way parents and their teenage children relate to each other. In the introduction to a special journal section about families and religion, Parke (2001) noted the discrepancy between the large portion of the population for whom religion is important and the limited amount of research studying the relationship between religion and family life. He issued a call to researchers, practitioners and policymakers to address the connections between religion and family life, including the role of religion in the lives of parents and their children. Some research has

begun to explore this question and has found that religion is an important factor in better understanding the dynamics of family relationships.

One set of studies linking religion and parent-child relationships examines the parent-child relationship as the predictor of future religiousness of the child. The quality of the parent-child relationship is viewed as one independent variable that influences the success of religious transmission from parent to child (Bao et al. 1999; Flor and Knapp 2001; King, Elder, and Whitbeck 1997; Myers 1996; Okagaki and Bevis 1999; Okagaki, Hammond, and Seamon 1999). There are also studies citing the parent-child bond in childhood as a predictor of the adult child's religious adherence and practices (Dudley 1999; Dudley and Wisbey 2000).

Another group of studies has looked at religion as an independent variable, seeking to discover the role that religion plays in forming and strengthening the bonds between parents and their children. The majority of these studies focus on the religiosity of the parents. Several have found parental religiosity to be positively related to general cohesion within the family (Abbott, Berry, and Meredith 1990) as well as the quality of the relationships between parents and youth (Brody, Stoneman, and Flor 1996; Brody et al. 1994; King 2003). Analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth conducted by Smith and Kim (2003) indicates that parent religion and family religious activity are significant predictors of the quality of relationships that youth report having with their parents.

Included in research treating religion as an independent variable are studies that link parental religiosity to the parent-child relationship through parenting style. The typologies of parenting style originally described by Diana Baumrind (1971) include authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. There is generally consensus in the research that authoritative

parenting has the most beneficial outcomes for children (Steinberg 2001). This parenting style is characterized by high levels of emotional warmth but also high expectations and firm, consistent discipline. The parenting style used by parents is then thought to influence the quality of the parent-child relationship, with authoritative parenting resulting in higher quality relationships. A consistent research finding across a number of studies is that parental religiosity is a strong predictor of parenting style (Mahoney et al. 2001; Regnerus 2003). In particular, scholars have found that conservative Protestants are more likely to hold high expectations for child obedience and to approve of the use of physical discipline (Ellison, Bartkowski, and Segal 1996b; Ellison, Bartkowski, and Segal 1996a; Ellison and Sherkat 1993a; Ellison and Sherkat 1993b). In addition to the emphasis on obedience and discipline, however, work by Bartkowski and Wilcox finds that conservative Protestant parenting style also includes high levels of warmth and parental involvement and lower levels of parental yelling (Bartkowski and Wilcox 2000; Bartkowski and Xu 2000; Wilcox 1998; Wilcox 2002). High parental demands combined with the high warmth and involvement characteristic of conservative Protestant parenting result in the “authoritative” parenting style that is thought to be more beneficial for children and youth. Research by Gunnoe et al. (1999) has provided further support for this association between religiosity and authoritative parenting. In this way, religion influences parenting style, which in turn influences the quality of relationships between parents and their children.

Much of what we know, then, about the connection between religion and family relationships has to do with the ways in which parental religiosity influences parenting styles and the family context in which children are raised. We know far less about the ways in which adolescents’ religious commitments shape their interactions with other family

members and their perceptions of family relationships. There is a wealth of literature demonstrating the myriad ways in which religion appears to guide and influence the lives of teenagers. The religious commitments of teenagers have been found to be a protective factor against delinquency and risk behaviors (Cochran 1993; Cochran and Akers 1989; Smith and Faris 2003a; Wallace and Forman 1998). Adolescent religiosity has also been positively related to higher self-esteem, more positive life attitudes, and more constructive social behaviors, while inversely related to depression, suicide ideation, and suicide attempts (Donahue and Benson 1995; Smith and Faris 2003a; Smith and Faris 2003b; Wright, Frost, and Wisecarver 1993). In addition to being less likely to engage in risk behaviors, Wallace and Forman (1998) discovered that religious youth are more likely to engage in activities that are beneficial to their health, such as exercise, eating properly, and getting enough rest. In other research, youth religiosity is often inversely related to early initiation of sexual activity and the frequency of sexual activity (Lammers et al. 2000; Regnerus 2003; Thornton and Camburn 1989). And on the academic front, two recent studies provide evidence about the ways in which youth religious participation may improve education outcomes (Regnerus 2000; Regnerus and Elder 2003).

Although religion seems to be linked to a variety of outcomes for teenagers, there are very few studies that adequately explore the nature and quality of existing family relationships of youth and the way these relationships may be shaped by adolescents' religious commitments and practices. We have reason to think that religion has an influence on the way that parents interact with their children. However, the almost exclusive focus on parent religiosity implies that parents alone shape the quality of parent-child relationships. In fact, children and teenagers are not passive receivers in their relationships with their parents. The parent-

child relationship is a dynamic interaction of two active agents. It is true that the agency of children is significantly limited and shaped in large part by their parents. However, as children move into adolescents, they gain power in their relationships with their parents and develop a more equal role in parent-child interactions (Mahoney 2005; Steinberg and Silk 2002). It seems important then, if we are to better understand the influences on the quality of relationships between parents and teenagers, that we seek to better understand the dynamics that the teenagers bring to the relationship, including possible religious influences.

Adolescent religiosity may influence family relationships through both direct and indirect mechanisms. As stated above, religion has been linked with multiple positive outcomes for teenagers. Many of these outcomes have in turn been linked with improved family relationships (self-esteem, pro-social behavior, lower levels of delinquency). Therefore, we should expect that in addition to adolescent attitudes toward family relationships, the behaviors they exhibit within these relationships will be influenced either directly or indirectly by their religious commitments.

The need for research that explores the ways in which both parent and adolescent religiosity operate within the parent-child relationship has been highlighted by one such study that has addressed this issue. Pearce and Axinn (1998) use longitudinal data from the Intergenerational Panel Study of Mothers and Children (IPSMC) to document the role of religion in the relationship quality of mothers and their young-adult children. This is one of the few studies that accounts for the religiosity of both mothers and children when measuring religion's impact on relationship quality. They find that mothers' religiosity improves the quality of their relationships with their children. In addition to the religiosity of the mother, however, they also show that mother-child congruence in religious affiliation, attendance,



and importance of religion lead to more positive reports about the mother-child relationship. Their results point to the potential fruitfulness of this area of research, demonstrating that the religious practices and commitments of youth also play a significant role in the parent-child relationship dynamic. As with any research, however, there are strengths and limitations to the data analyzed by Pearce and Axinn (1998). The longitudinal study of white mothers and their children from the Detroit area provides a unique look at the role of religious influences over time. However, their work needs to be expanded upon with research that follows their lead yet further extends the analysis with nationally-representative data that allow for examination of mothers and fathers as well as comparisons across racial groups.

#### *Theoretical Mechanisms of Religious Influence*

A number of pieces of scholarship have proposed theoretical mechanisms to explain the pathways through which religion influences adolescent outcomes generally (Smith 2003b) and parent-adolescent relationships more specifically (Mahoney et al. 2001; Pearce and Axinn 1998; Regnerus and Burdette 2006). Two categories of these mechanisms relate specifically to the relationship between religion and parent-adolescent relationship quality.

***Pro-family moral beliefs*** – A recent article by Smith (2003b) explores nine theoretical hypotheses about how religion may influence the lives of teenagers. One of these hypotheses concerns moral directives. Smith argues that religion provides teenagers with moral directives that can serve to guide their life choices and commitments. Many religious traditions include such moral directives – not only for teenagers, but for all adherents – that are specifically linked to family relationships. For example, the Jewish and Christian traditions have a history of not only placing a high value on family relationships, but also

providing directives about how these relationships should be characterized and cultivated (D'Antonio 1983; Thornton 1985). A study by Bartkowski and Ellison (1995) examined religious teachings on parenting through an investigation of mainline and conservative Protestant popular writings about child-rearing. While these two groups differ significantly in the parenting methods they endorse, there is a common emphasis on the crucial importance of positive parent-child relationships. Of note is the role of religion in providing directives to parents about how to construct their relationships with their children. Parents, as well as teenagers, who participate in religious activities may also be exposed to these types of directives about family relationships through sermons, religious teachings, religious media, statements by clergy, and biblical texts (Gershoff, Miller, and Holden 1999; Pearce and Axinn 1998). Research also suggests that many people view family relationships to be sacred in nature – a phenomenon Mahoney and colleagues (2003) refer to as “sanctification” – and therefore subject to religious authority and teachings (Bartkowski and Ellison 1995; Marks and Dollahite 2001). Among those individuals who adhere to religious teachings and beliefs, we would expect that their efforts to follow the moral directives provided by religion concerning family relationships might result in higher quality relationships. The quality of the relationship, then, would be influenced to the extent that either the parent or teenager is exposed to and acting upon religious beliefs about their family relationships.

***Religious solidarity*** – The extent to which parents and teenagers share similar religious commitments and practices has been found to have an impact on the quality of the relationship between parents and teenagers (Mahoney 2005; Pearce and Axinn 1998; Regnerus and Burdette 2006). Religious solidarity may be related to increased relational solidarity, while disagreements about religion may produce increased tension or friction in a

parent-child relationship. Religious solidarity may contribute to the quality of relationship between parent and teenager through (1) shared religious belief and commitments and (2) shared religious activities and networks. Shared religious beliefs could serve as a common bond between parent and teenager, providing a sense that they share their core values and view of the world. These shared values and viewpoints may contribute to a better understanding of one another and ability to relate to one another. In addition, I discussed above the role of religious beliefs in providing guidance and behavioral expectations for family relationships. If parent and adolescent subscribe to the same religious beliefs, they are more likely to approach their relationship with similar expectations and attitudes, making it easier to get along. Also, as noted by Gecas and Seff (1990), when it comes to values and beliefs, it is important to distinguish between adolescents' perceptions of similarities and the actual measured similarities with their parents, since these are not always the same.

Therefore, an important aspect of religious solidarity with regard to religious beliefs is how similar to their parents' religious beliefs teenagers perceive their own religious beliefs to be.

Pearce and Axinn (1998) measured mother-child religious congruence by examining similarity of religious affiliation, similarity of attendance levels, and similarity of the importance of religion as reported by the mothers and their children. While these measures indicate similarity of religiosity, they do not address the question of shared religious practice or experience. The shared experience of engaging in religious activities together might also be expected to increase the quality of parent-child relationships (Mahoney 2005). At the most general level, participating in religious activities together allows parents and adolescents to spend time together. In addition, this joint participation can contribute to a joint awareness of the life of the other. Parents whose teenagers are involved in the same

religious congregation as they have more access to what types of things their children are learning and experiencing during their time in religious congregations. Similarly, teenagers may be exposed to this side of their parents' social lives, giving them a better understanding of their parents. This can also lead to more integrated social networks. When parents and teenagers are involved in the same religious congregation it increases the likelihood of closed social networks where parents know their children's friends and children know their parents' friends within the congregation. These dense social networks may foster increased communication and interactions that contribute to closer relationships between parents and adolescents (Smith 2003a).

### *Hypotheses*

In order for individuals to adopt pro-family moral beliefs promoted by a religious community, they must be exposed to those beliefs. The more involved or active a person is in a particular religious group, the more opportunity there will be for the religious group to pass on its values to and exert influence over the individual. And to the extent that high levels of participation indicate a higher level of commitment to the religion, we would expect to see a stronger relationship between religion and outcomes of interest among those with high levels of participation.

Religious participation, however, is not a direct measure of religious commitment or salience. For teenagers in particular, it is necessary to distinguish between religious attendance and religious salience. Teenagers are not fully autonomous individuals and their religious practices may be the result of parental direction as much as voluntary choice. Measures of religious belief and commitments tap more directly into the question of salience.

These measure not only the role of religion as a contextual factor, but the role of religion in shaping the subjective personal beliefs and values of an individual. Religious beliefs may serve as a measure of how much an adolescent has internalized the messages and teachings of their particular religious tradition. The internalization of these beliefs may be related to the internalization of beliefs about the sanctity of family relationships and a commitment to the teachings about proper behavior and attitudes toward family members.

Religious service attendance and adolescent personal religiosity serve as proxy measures of the role of pro-family moral beliefs that are theorized to influence the relationship quality between parents and teenagers. Teenagers who have high levels of religious exposure through religious service attendance and high levels of religious salience as measured by personal religiosity are expected to be more likely to hold pro-family moral beliefs that contribute to higher quality relationships with their parents. Given these expectations, I propose:

H1: Teenagers with higher levels of religious service attendance will report higher levels of closeness with parents and higher degrees of warmth in the parental relationship.

H2: Teenagers with higher levels of personal religiosity will report higher levels of closeness with parents and higher degrees of warmth in the parental relationship.

The second theoretical mechanism of interest is that of religious solidarity between parents and teenagers. The question of interest is whether religion serves as a point of commonality and solidarity in a way that draws parents and teenagers into closer relationships. Does sharing similar religious beliefs and practices lead teenagers to perceive their relationships with their parents to be better? The other side of this question is whether conflict brought about by religious disagreement has a negative affect on the relationship between the parent and the teen. Earlier I proposed two mechanisms by which solidarity might operate to

improve parent-child relationships: shared beliefs and shared activities and networks.

Measured separately, I expect both shared religious belief and shared religious activity to contribute to stronger family relationships:

H3: Teenagers who report holding religious beliefs that are similar to their parents will report higher levels of closeness with parents and higher degrees of warmth in the parental relationship.

H4: Teenagers with higher levels of shared religiosity with parents will report higher levels of closeness with parents and higher degrees of warmth in the parental relationship.

The above hypotheses speak to the expected direct effect of religious solidarity on relationship quality. However, I also expect religious solidarity to have an indirect relationship with parent-adolescent relationship quality through the religiosity of the adolescents:

H5: Teenagers who report higher levels of religious solidarity with their parents will also report higher levels of personal religiosity and religious service attendance.

#### *Key Limitations of Existing Research*

Research to date has been helpful in suggesting that religion plays an important role in the quality of relationships between parents and teenagers. However, existing research involves some significant limitations. Mahoney and her colleagues (2001) note the serious limitation of the way religion and family life are often measured. In their meta-analysis of 48 different studies of religion and parenting, they found that most of the research used single-item or global indexes to measure religion and many used only a single-item assessment of parenting as well. They claim that this reliance on single-item measures limits our ability to fully understand and address the mechanisms through which religion and family life are

connected. According to Mahoney et al. (2001), there is a need for more multidimensional measures of both religious commitments and measures of family relationships.

One component of multidimensional measures is multiple reporters. A significant proportion of research based on survey analysis is limited to the reports of one family member. In measures of family relationships, this is clearly a significant limitation, since different reporters may provide different perspectives on the relationships in question (Thornton, Orbuch, and Axinn 1995; Walker and Thompson 1983). In addition, if religious solidarity and cohesion are thought to be important facets of the influence of religion on family relationships, it is necessary to have data on the religious beliefs and commitments of multiple family members, not only a single family member (Mahoney et al. 2001). To adequately explore the possible impact of religion on parent-child relationships, it is necessary to move beyond the limitation of single-reporter data and use reports from both parents and their teenage children.

A related limitation of concern to this study is in large part an artifact of the single-reporter problem. As mentioned above, most of what we know about parent-child relationships is based on data collected from parents. More research is needed to incorporate the perspective of the teenagers, not only about their relationship with their parents but also regarding their religiosity. The majority of the existing literature is focused on the religiosity of the parents and the impact this has on their relationships with their teenage children. The parallel influence of teenagers' religious commitments and beliefs on family relationships deserves more careful examination than scholarship to date has given.

### *Data and Methods*

This analysis will examine the quality of parent-adolescent relationships as reported by teenagers and the role that adolescent and parent religion plays in these relationships. The dataset that I will use for the analysis contains a wide range of religion measures from both parents and teenagers. These measures tap into a variety of dimensions of religion and will allow for more nuanced exploration of the mechanisms and pathways through which religion may shape family relationships. In addition to a wealth of religion measures, the data contain a number of good measures of family life. The survey questions about family relationships were designed in an effort to extend our knowledge about the relationships between parents and teenagers. In order to address limitations of previous research, we designed the survey to include multiple questions about family relationships, providing multidimensional measures of family dynamics. These measures of religion and family relationships provide for significant analytical advance over previous research.

### Data Source

This study uses data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The quantitative component of this data is the National Survey of Youth and Religion (NSYR). This is a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 U.S. English and Spanish speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, and of one of their parents. The NSYR also includes 80 oversampled Jewish households, bringing the total number of completed NSYR cases to 3,370. The NSYR was conducted from July, 2002 to April, 2003 by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill using a random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey method, employing a sample of randomly generated telephone



numbers representative of all household telephones in the 50 United States. The national survey sample was arranged in replicates based on the proportion of working household telephone exchanges nationwide. This RDD method ensures equal representation of listed, unlisted, and not-yet-listed household telephone numbers. Eligible households included at least one teenager between the ages of 13-17 living in the household for at least six months of the year. In order to randomize responses within households, and so to help attain representativeness of age and gender, interviewers asked to conduct the survey with the teenager in the household who had the most recent birthday. The NSYR was conducted with members of both English and Spanish speaking households. Participants were offered a financial incentive to participate. All randomly generated telephone numbers were dialed a minimum of 20 times over a minimum of five months per number, spread out over varying hours during week days, week nights, and weekends. The calling design included at least two telephone-based attempts to convert refusals. Households refusing to cooperate with the survey but established by initial screening to include children ages 13 to 17 in residence and with telephone numbers able to be matched to mailing addresses were also sent by mail information about the survey, contact information for researchers, and a request to cooperate and complete the survey; those records were then called back again for possible refusal conversions. Ninety-six percent of parent complete households also achieved teenager completes. Diagnostic analyses comparing NSYR data with 2002 U.S. Census data on comparable households and with comparable adolescent surveys---such as Monitoring the Future, the National Household Education Survey, and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health---confirm that the NSYR provides a nationally representative sample without identifiable sampling and nonresponse biases of U.S. teenagers ages 13-17 and their

parents living in households (for details, see Smith and Denton 2003). For descriptive purposes, a weight was created to adjust for number of teenagers in household, number of household telephone numbers, census region of residence, and household income. The 80 Jewish oversample cases are omitted from this analysis.

### Limitations of Cross-sectional data

One important issue that must be recognized with this analysis is that it employs cross-sectional data. Cross-sectional data inherently limits causal explanations about the relationships found in the analyses. According to Regnerus and Smith (2005), scholars are cautious about attributing causation to observed associations, and this is a particular concern with regards to religion. Claims that religion influences other aspects of social life have drawn skepticism<sup>1</sup> and the associations between religion and outcomes have often been attributed instead to selection effects. In my analysis, there is the possibility that any relationship between religion and the quality of parent-child relationships is the result of some underlying, unmeasured variable that influences both an individual's propensity to be religious and their ability to maintain quality family relationships. There is also the possibility of endogeneity as a result of a reciprocal relationship between religion and relationship quality. These are issues of concern to not only my specific analysis, but to the larger first-wave project of the National Study of Youth and Religion of which my research is a part.

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<sup>1</sup> Stark (2000) suggests that generations of social scientists "have embraced a strange doctrine," namely that they "prefer to trace all religious phenomena to *material* causes and are quick to deny the possibility that religion is the real cause of anything."

In an attempt to address this issue, Regnerus and Smith (2005) have conducted analysis using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Through analysis of longitudinal data, they conclude that while effects of religion variables do appear to be endogenous, the endogeneity does not eliminate independent religious effects. Instead, the effects of endogeneity on any given model of religious influence are limited and do not warrant entirely dismissing the religious effects as “selection effects.” Their findings do not eliminate the need to be cautious in the interpretation of associations found in cross-sectional data. It does, however, suggest that there is value to continuing to examine questions about religious effects, even when the best available data are cross-sectional.

While acknowledging the limitations of cross-sectional data, I also rely on theoretical logic to inform my understanding of the direction of causation among the variables in my analysis. Theoretical arguments suggest that while there is likely some reciprocity between religion and relationship quality, there are also strong reasons to believe that religion has a causal influence on relationship quality that would not be explained away by reverse causation or selection effects. One goal of my analysis, then, is to construct models that are consistent with theoretical expectations. The extent to which the models presented here correctly model that which we expect based on these theoretical understandings will inform our ability to make qualified and cautious causal inferences.

A second goal of my analysis is to lay the groundwork for future analyses. The cross-sectional data used here are part of a larger, longitudinal project. The data from second and third waves of this project are not yet available for analysis. However, in the future, I will be able to use these longitudinal data to further explore the relationship between religion and

relationship quality and make stronger claims about endogeneity, reciprocity, and causal direction.

### Analysis

The models in this paper will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). We know that even the best data is not able to measure concepts perfectly. SEM accounts for potential measurement error in the models by including error terms in the analysis. In addition, concepts such as relationship quality and religiosity are complex, and not accurately measured by a single indicator. To address this, my structural equation models include latent variables that allow underlying concepts to be measured using multiple indicators. In cases where there might be mediating variables within the model, SEM also allows me to model both the direct and indirect effects of these variables. Finally, the use of SEM allows me to correct for the categorical nature of my latent concept indicator variables. By using a polychoric correlation matrix, SEM measures propensities that are more consistent with categorical variables and thus avoids the problem of treating these variables as continuous.

In the first stage of the analysis, I used confirmatory factor analysis to determine how well I specified the measurement of the latent concepts. The resulting measurement models provide measures of overall and component fit that allow me to assess whether or not the indicators that I am using accurately reflect the underlying latent concept that I am trying to measure. The results of these measurement models are detailed in Appendix B. In the second stage of the analysis, I develop structural models to test the relationships between my variables of interest.

## *Measures*

### Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this analysis are measures of the quality of the parent-child relationship. Reports about the quality of this relationship were provided by both the parent and teenage survey respondents. In response to the existing gaps in the literature, the primary focus of this analysis will be to understand how adolescents' religiosity influences their perceptions and reports about their relationships with their parents.

Surveyed teenagers were asked a series of questions about the mother figure and father figure residing in their household. The survey did not include questions about non-residential parents, so this analysis is limited to residential parents or parent figures. This gives us a picture of the relationships teenagers are involved with on a daily basis in their place of residence, a measure of the quality of relationships in the daily social context of the home. Teenagers were first asked about their mother or resident mother figure, and then asked the same series of questions about their father or resident father figure.<sup>2</sup> From these questions, I have created two measures of relationship quality, *relationship closeness* and *relationship warmth*. Each of these two concepts is measured as a separate latent variable for both mother and father. Relationship closeness is constructed as a latent variable consisting of four indicators: closeness, getting along, communication, and hanging out. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. How close or not close do you feel to your mother/father?<sup>3</sup> Extremely close, Very close, Fairly close, Somewhat close, Not very close, or Not close at all?

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<sup>2</sup> The questions were asked about the resident mother and father figures. This could include a parent, step-parent, grandparent, legal guardian, etc. Throughout the paper, the term "mother" and "father" will be used, however, these terms are meant to include all resident parental figures.

<sup>3</sup> The CATI program used to administer the survey was programmed to insert the appropriate term in place of "mother" or "father", such as "mother", "step-mother", "grandmother", "father's partner", etc.

2. Generally, how well do you and your mother/father get along? Extremely well, Very well, Fairly well, Not so well, Pretty poorly, or Very badly?
3. How often do you talk with your mother/father about personal subjects, such as friendships, dating, or drinking? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?
4. How often, if at all, do you and your mother/father just have fun hanging out and doing things together? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

Relationship warmth is constructed as a latent variable consisting of three indicators:

expression of love, affection, and praise. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. How often does your mother/father tell you that s/he loves you?
2. How often does your mother/father hug you?
3. How often does your mother/father praise and encourage you?

### Independent Variables

There are a variety of factors related to the quality of relationships between teenagers and their parents. As adolescents get older and move through the stages of early, middle and late adolescence, relationships with parents may become more strained, therefore I control for the age of the teenager.<sup>4</sup> I also control for the sex of the teenager (female=1) to account for differences between relationships with a same-sex or opposite-sex parent. In addition, all models control for the race of the teenager (black, white, Hispanic and other), residence in the South, and the gender of the parent survey respondent.

The employment status of the parent is also a factor that has been linked with the quality of parent-child relationships. I include an indicator of whether or not the focal parent is working full-time. In models measuring relationship quality with mothers, I include an

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<sup>4</sup> Age of adolescent is a continuous variable calculated based on number of days from their date of birth to the date of completion of the survey divided by 365.25 to obtain exact age in years. For 10 cases, teenagers reported their age instead of their date of birth. In these cases numerical age was used.

indicator of the mother's employment status. In models for father relationship quality, I use an indicator of father's employment status.

Education has also been linked to parenting style and parent-child relationships (Dornbusch 1989; Hilliard 1996). The NSYR survey contains measures of the education of both the resident mother and the resident father, if applicable. However, including controls for both the education of the mother and the education of the father may be counter-productive, given that these would likely be similar and any education effect may disappear if both are included in the model. Some analyses use the education level of the father as the proxy variable for parent education. However, a significant portion of the teenagers surveyed do not have a residential father figure. So to avoid missing data in the case of single parents, I measure education as the highest level of parent education in the household. This approach also provides a more accurate measure of the potential educational resources of the household in cases where the mother has higher education levels than the father in the household. The measure of parental education is divided into five dummy variables: no parent has high school diploma; at least one parent has a high school diploma; at least one parent has some post-secondary education (but no college degree); and at least one parent has a four-year college degree or greater.

In his review of the study of adolescence, Dornbusch (1989) calls for more studies that examine the role of family structure in family behaviors and relationships. We would expect that the family disruption characteristic of non-intact family types may lead to strained relationships between teenagers and their parents. In addition, we know that teenagers' relationships with biological parents can differ significantly from their relationships with step-parents or other non-biological parent figures. To account for the variation in

relationship quality across various family structures, I have created family structure indicator variables. The indicator variables were created from a series of questions asked of the parent respondent about the family relationships in the household. These questions included: current marital status of the parent respondent, their relationship to the teen, their spouse or cohabiting partner's relationship to the teen, and the sex of their partner (if living with an unmarried partner). Using the answers to these questions, I created a series of nineteen possible family types. These nineteen were collapsed into six groups of family types: 1. Two-parent biological (includes biological, adoptive and cohabiting), 2. Two-parents with biological mother and step-father, 3. Two-parents with biological father and step-mother, 4. Two-parent other (includes legal guardians and foster parents), 5. Single-parent related (biological, adoptive or grandparent), 6. Single-parent other (step- or foster parent, legal guardian, etc).

Research has also linked the quality of relationships between parents and children to immigrant generation (Harker 2001; Willgerodt and Thompson 2005). In order to control for this, I include measures for immigrant status. First generation teenagers are those who report that they were born outside of the United States and were not U.S. citizens at birth. Second generation teenagers were born in the U.S. but have at least one parent who was not born in the U.S. and was not born as a U.S. citizen in another country. Indicator variables for these two groups are included in all of the models, with all other respondents serving as the reference category.



## Religion Measures

*Religious service attendance* serves as a measure of religious participation. Religious service attendance is measured by a single survey question: “How often do you attend religious services, NOT counting weddings, baptisms, or funerals?” Response categories are coded as follows: 0=Never, 1=Few times a year, 2=Many times a year, 3=Once a month, 4=2-3 times a month, 5=Once a week, 6=More than once a week.

*Adolescent personal religiosity* is a latent variable with six indicators: importance of faith in daily life, importance of faith in major life decisions, closeness to God, commitment to live life for God, frequency of prayer, and frequency of scripture reading. These indicators are operationalized by the following survey questions:

1. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping how you live your daily life? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
2. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping your major life decisions? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
3. How distant or close do you feel to God most of the time? (0=do not believe in God, 1=extremely distant, 2=very distant, 3=somewhat distant, 4=somewhat close, 5=very close, 6=extremely close)
4. Have you ever made a personal commitment to live your life for God? (0=no, 1=yes)
5. How often, if ever, do you pray by yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6>About once a day, 7=many times a day)
6. How often, if ever, do you read from the [Scriptures] to yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6>About once a day, 7=many times a day)

To measure religious solidarity as a function of shared beliefs, I use a single variable constructed from answers to survey questions about similarity of beliefs. Religious teenagers were asked, “Would you say that your own religious beliefs are very similar, somewhat similar, somewhat different or very different from your mother / father?” Teenagers who did

not identify themselves as religious were asked, “Would you say that your own beliefs about religion are very similar, somewhat similar, somewhat different or very different from your mother / father?” These questions capture the degree to which respondents perceive themselves to have beliefs that are similar to their parents. In this chapter, I am interested in the specific effect of shared religiosity. In order to distinguish generic similarity of belief from particularly religious shared belief, I have combined the response from these two questions into a single variable, *similar belief*, with the following categories:

- 0 = Non-religious teenagers and religious teenagers with beliefs that are somewhat different or very different from mother / father
- 1 = Religious teenagers with beliefs that are somewhat similar to mother / father
- 2 = Religious teenagers with beliefs that are very similar to mother / father

This coding scheme represents the extent to which teenagers who hold religious beliefs perceive these beliefs to be similar to their parents.

*Shared religiosity* is a measured designed to capture shared religious activity and networks. It is constructed as a latent variable with three indicators: attend together, same religion, and pray with parent. *Attend together* is based on parent reports of whether the teenage respondent attends religious services with their mother and/or with their father. This is an indicator variable where 1=parent and teenager attend the same religious congregation and 0=parent and teenager do not attend the same religious congregation. *Same religion* is also an indicator variable where 1=parent and teenager reported the same religious identity and 0=parent and teenager reported a different religious identity. *Pray with parent* is a yes/no indicator variable based on the survey question: “In the last year, have you prayed out loud or silently together with one or both of your parents, other than at mealtimes or at religious services?”

## *Models*

Figure 2.1 shows the general model framing these analyses. Accounting for the control variables mentioned above, the model is designed to examine whether various dimensions of adolescents' religious lives are associated with the quality of relationship with their parents.

In the first set of models, each model includes all of the control variables and one of the religion measures. I run a separate model for each religion measure with relationship quality as the dependent variable. These models test H1-H4 to establish whether or not there is a relationship between the religion measure and relationship quality. After testing the direction of the relationship between each religion measure and relationship quality, I examine a more complete model. In this second set of models, my goal is to determine the ways in which the multiple facets of religion are related to relationship quality. Including multiple measures of religion together in the models allows me to compare the role of each measure in the model and begin to understand the mechanisms at work. Figure 2.2 highlights the modeled relationships between the three religion concepts: religious practice, religious belief / salience, and religious solidarity. All three religion measures are expected to have a direct effect on the outcomes of relationship quality. In addition, as stated in H5, religious solidarity is theorized to influence the other two facets of religion, measured here as religious service attendance and adolescent personal religiosity.

## *Results*

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show the results of the first set of models for mothers and fathers with each religion measure entered in a separate model. When entered separately into a model with only control variables and one religion measure, each of the dimensions of religion

measured here are positive and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. These relationships hold true across the models for relationships with mothers and relationships with fathers. These results are consistent with H1-H4. As was expected based on theoretical grounds, adolescents who report higher levels of religiousness also report having closer and warmer relationships with their parents.

Tables 2.3 and 2.4 show the results of the second set of models. These models include multiple dimensions of religion, with religious solidarity measured as having direct and indirect effects on the dependent variables. As I discussed above, religious solidarity can be measured in two ways – solidarity of belief or solidarity of practice and networks. While these two concepts are correlated, they are theoretically distinct and may operate differently within family relationships. I model these concepts separately in order to maintain this theoretical distinction. Table 2.3 shows the results of a full model that includes similar belief, religious service attendance, and adolescent personal religiosity. Table 2.4 shows the results of a full model that includes shared religiosity, religious service attendance, and adolescent personal religiosity.

In Table 2.3, adolescent personal religiosity continues to be statistically significant in the positive direction with respect to both closeness and warmth with mother and father. However, when entered into the full model, the coefficient for attendance becomes negative. This relationship is significant for parental warmth only in the model for relationship with father, but it is statistically significant for relationship closeness in both the mother and father models. This indicates that once the personal religiosity of adolescents and the extent to which they share similar religious beliefs with their parents are taken into account, the

remaining effect of religious service attendance is negatively related to teenagers feeling close to both parents and negatively related to relationship warmth with father.

Table 2.3 also indicates that similar belief has a positive direct effect, with a statistically significant relationship with both closeness and warmth. In addition to the direct effect, similar belief also appears to operate indirectly. Similar belief has a positive and statistically significant influence on both adolescent attendance and personal religiosity. Religious teenagers who report having similar beliefs as their parents report more frequent church attendance and higher levels of personal religiosity. Therefore, the measure of similar belief has both a direct and an indirect effect on relationship closeness and warmth with both mothers and fathers.

Table 2.4 shows the results for a full model with shared religiosity instead of similar belief. In these models where three religion measures are included, attendance once again is negatively related to relationship closeness for mothers and fathers. While the coefficient for relationship warmth is also negative, it is not statistically significant in either model. The coefficient for adolescent personal religiosity remains positive and statistically significant across the models for both mothers and fathers. As was expected, shared religiosity is positively related to both adolescent attendance and personal religiosity in both models, indicating that shared religiosity operates on relationship closeness and warmth indirectly through the religious commitments of adolescents. Shared religiosity also has a statistically significant direct effect on relationship warmth for both mothers and fathers. However, while shared religiosity has a direct positive relationship to closeness with fathers, there is no significant direct effect in the model for closeness with mothers. Net of the effect of

adolescent religious practice and belief, teenagers who share religious experience with their mothers are not significantly more likely to report close relationships with their mothers.

Consistent with H5, both similar belief and shared religiosity are related to more frequent religious service attendance and higher levels of adolescent personal religiosity. In addition, with the exception of closeness to mothers, both measures of religious solidarity continue to be directly related to relationship quality when adolescent attendance and personal religiosity are included in the model.

### *Discussion*

The empirical data modeling in the above analysis produces results that are generally consistent with theoretical expectations about religious mechanism and how they operate in the quality of relationships between adolescents and their parents. Given the prevalence of pro-family moral beliefs within most religious traditions, I hypothesized that increased religious participation and religious salience would lead to better relationship quality between adolescents and their parents. It was expected that religious involvement would benefit family relationships through the internalization of pro-family messages. However, an unexpected finding with regard to religious service attendance provides an alternative perspective to the hypothesis regarding pro-family moral beliefs. In the full models I find that net of a personal commitment to religion on the part of the adolescent, the act of attending religious services does not contribute to better relationships with their parents, and in some cases appears to have a negative impact. I expected that exposure to religious teachings would be positively related to relationship quality. It appears, however, that exposure to the pro-family messages, as measured by attendance, is not sufficient in the

absence of personal religious commitment, as measured by adolescent personal religiosity. I discussed earlier the partial autonomy of adolescents, indicating that religious service attendance is not always a voluntary activity. It is possible that the negative relationship between attendance and relationship quality found in the full models reflects those teenagers who are attending religious services but do not have a personal investment in religion. If their attendance is required of them by a parent, then perhaps such a requirement contributes to tension in the relationship, thus counteracting any potential relational benefit of religious service attendance.

In concert with the negative relationship between attendance and relationship quality, the strong positive relationship between adolescent personal religiosity and relationship quality lends further support for the theoretical mechanism of pro-family moral beliefs. It was suggested that pro-family teachings by religious groups have the potential to influence family relationships to the extent that they are heard, internalized and acted upon. Religious precepts and teachings presumably hold more salience for those adolescents who report higher levels of personal religiosity and religious commitment. As was expected, adolescents for whom religion is more salient – those with higher levels of personal religiosity – report better relationships with their parents.

The findings regarding religious service attendance and personal religiosity, while consistent with the theoretical expectations, also highlight the importance of using multiple measures of religion to capture the various ways in which religion is related to relationship quality. The full models demonstrate that the institutional religious practice of teenagers (religious service attendance) and the personal religious commitments of teenagers (adolescent personal religiosity) operate differently in relation to parent-adolescent

relationship quality. When we are able to include separate measures for these two dimensions of adolescents' religious lives, we see that exposure to religious messages through attendance alone does not bolster family relationship quality. Instead, personal religious commitment appears to be the factor most likely to be related to better relationships between parents and adolescents.

In addition, the full models provide insight into the nuanced contribution of religious solidarity. Consistent with the theoretical expectations about religious solidarity, I find that both similar religious beliefs and shared religious activities and networks are positively related to relationship quality between parents and teenagers. It seems that adolescents who share common religious ground with their parents also report having higher quality relationships with their parents. In addition, I find that religious solidarity between adolescents and their parents operates in part by contributing to the religiosity of adolescents, which is in turn related to relationship-quality. Religious solidarity is significant to parent-child relationships, then, not only in providing shared religious experience to parent and adolescent, but also because religious solidarity within the family provides a context that is supportive of an adolescents' overall commitment to religion, thus paving the way for the pro-family teachings discussed above.

Much of the research to date has focused on the religiosity of parents and the ways in which this is related to the parent-child relationship. Because teenagers are frequently very similar to their parents religiously, some research that focuses on parent religiosity assumes that a measure of parent religiosity also encompasses the religiosity of the teenagers in the relationship. However, these findings demonstrate that adolescent religiosity appears to have its own distinct connection with parent-child relationship quality. The full models included



measures of religious similarity between parent and teenager. Even with this similarity accounted for, the personal religious commitments of teenagers continued to be significantly and positively related to parental closeness and warmth. The extent to which teenagers adopt and personalize their religious teachings seems to play a significant role in the quality of their relationships with their parents. And while the relationship between attendance and relationship quality was negative in the full models, this too is an indication that religious practice is related to parent-child relationship quality in a way that is distinct from simply sharing the same religious practices with their parents. Both of these findings point to the importance of including adolescent religiosity when modeling the role of religion in the parent-adolescent relationship. More broadly, this finding has implications for the larger project of parent-child relationship quality research. This supports previous concerns about parent-focused data and confirms the importance of incorporating the adolescent's perspective into the research design.

These findings contribute to a broader literature that is helping us to better understand religion and the role it plays in the dynamics of family relationships. Generally, we see that religion does appear to be one of the factors at work in the quality of relationships between adolescents and their parents. More specifically, modeling multiple dimensions of religion contributes to theoretical advancement and furthers our understanding of some of the mechanisms by which religion operates within the parent-child dynamic. It appears that religious practice alone is not a sufficient way to measure this relationship. Rather, personal religious commitments on the part of teenagers and religious solidarity with parents are important parts of the story linking religion to parent-child relationships. In addition, these research findings might also be extended beyond the application to parent-child relationships

to other family or non-family relationships in an effort to expand our understanding of the role of religion in the context of human interaction and relationships.

Finally, these analyses contribute to a larger research program seeking to better understand the lives of youth. Given the demonstrated influence that parent-child relationship quality has on so many aspects of adolescent success and well-being, it seems important that researchers, practitioners, and parents alike are able to better understand the factors that contribute to healthy parent-child relationships. This research has taken us another step in that direction, adding to what we already know about these relationships by identifying the importance of religion and the ways in which it is related to the relationship quality between parents and adolescents.

**Table 2.1: Relationship Quality With Mother on Individual Religion Measures (SEM Models)**

	Close	Warm	Close	Warm	Close	Warm	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>	0.044 ***	0.070 ***						
<b>Adolescent Personal Religiosity</b>			0.295 ***	0.299 ***				
<b>Similar Belief</b>					0.271 ***	0.281 ***		
<b>Shared Religiosity</b>							0.247 ***	0.319 ***
Female	0.164 ***	0.128 ***	0.092 **	0.059	0.164 ***	0.134 ***	0.133 ***	0.090 *
Age	-0.051 ***	-0.143 ***	-0.042 ***	-0.134 ***	-0.045 ***	-0.140 ***	-0.040 ***	-0.129 ***
Black	0.175 ***	-0.124 *	0.034	-0.254 ***	0.168 ***	-0.132 *	0.106 *	-0.205 ***
Hispanic	-0.002	-0.103	-0.013	-0.105	-0.015	-0.115	-0.046	-0.155 *
Other	-0.002	-0.117	-0.010	-0.120	0.017	-0.097	0.003	-0.107
Mom Works Full Time	-0.006	-0.022	0.005	-0.012	0.009	-0.008	-0.001	-0.016
South	0.048	0.167 ***	-0.046	0.083 *	0.035	0.171 ***	0.004	0.116 **
Parent Education:								
Less than High School	0.036	0.062	0.010	0.033	0.080	0.104	0.055	0.087
Some beyond High School	-0.018	0.128 *	-0.002	0.145 **	-0.027	0.123 *	-0.049	0.088
B.A./B.S. degree or more	-0.114 *	0.155 **	-0.085	0.192 ***	-0.124 **	0.164 **	-0.171 ***	0.084
2 Parents: Biological Mother	0.033	-0.033	0.035	-0.041	0.060	-0.010	0.091	0.037
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.356 ***	-0.710 ***	-0.331 ***	-0.680 ***	-0.306 ***	-0.675 ***	-0.228 *	-0.542 ***
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.154	-0.136	0.152	-0.137	0.202 *	-0.097	0.186 *	-0.091
1 Parent: Biological	-0.031	0.015	0.012	0.046	0.005	0.046	0.036	0.096
1 Parent: Not Biological	-0.049	-0.048	-0.040	-0.044	-0.004	-0.011	0.020	0.039
Parent Gender	0.112 *	0.039	0.095 *	0.018	0.100 *	0.022	0.093	0.012
First Generation	-0.235 *	-0.260 *	-0.219 *	-0.242 *	-0.220	-0.255	-0.267	-0.299
Second Generation	-0.077	-0.136	-0.036	-0.101	-0.095	-0.169	-0.085	-0.149
Chi-Square		625.827 ***		1047.322 ***		632.872 ***		828.323 ***
CFI		0.930		0.958		0.926		0.926
TLI		0.943		0.972		0.938		0.934
RMSEA		0.047		0.043		0.047		0.045
Close R-Square		0.066		0.160		0.124		0.117
Warm R-Square		0.139		0.203		0.174		0.200
Personal Religiosity R-Square				0.127				
N		3035		3035		3035		3035

Notes: Reference categories are White, High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\* p&lt; .05    \*\*p&lt; .01    \*\*\*p&lt; .001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 2.2: Relationship Quality with Father on Individual Religion Measures (SEM Models)**

	Close	Warm	Close	Warm	Close	Warm	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>	0.047 ***	0.054 ***						
<b>Adolescent Personal Religiosity</b>			0.266 ***	0.262 ***				
<b>Similar Belief</b>					0.266 ***	0.286 ***		
<b>Shared Religiosity</b>							0.242 ***	0.270 ***
Female	-0.327 ***	0.297 ***	-0.391 ***	0.232 ***	-0.319 ***	0.318 ***	-0.335 ***	0.284 ***
Age	-0.088 ***	-0.161 ***	-0.081 ***	-0.156 ***	-0.084 ***	-0.159 ***	-0.080 ***	-0.152 ***
Black	-0.043	-0.140 *	-0.162 **	-0.255 ***	-0.038	-0.139 *	-0.100	-0.203 ***
Hispanic	-0.027	0.041	-0.024	0.045	-0.027	0.041	-0.070	-0.007
Other	-0.191 *	-0.217 *	-0.187 *	-0.216 *	-0.158	-0.186 *	-0.180 *	-0.206 *
Dad Works Full Time	-0.052	-0.062	-0.062	-0.068	-0.070	-0.083	-0.085	-0.097
South	0.074	0.126 **	-0.013	0.045	0.069	0.126 **	0.023	0.070
Parent Education:								
Less than High School	0.132	0.078	0.113	0.061	0.123	0.070	0.086	0.028
Some beyond High School	0.012	0.136 *	0.032	0.155 **	0.006	0.131 *	-0.010	0.109
B.A./B.S. degree or more	0.042	0.194 ***	0.072	0.227 ***	0.042	0.199 ***	-0.020	0.125 *
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.512 ***	-0.701 ***	-0.508 ***	-0.704 ***	-0.451 ***	-0.642 ***	-0.417 ***	-0.595 ***
2 Parents: Biological Father	0.626 ***	0.412 ***	0.647 ***	0.439 ***	0.674 ***	0.458 ***	0.731 ***	0.535 ***
2 Parents: Neither Biological	-0.169	-0.143	-0.169	-0.144	-0.134	-0.109	-0.150	-0.122
1 Parent: Biological	0.237 *	0.257 *	0.283 **	0.299 **	0.262 **	0.285 **	0.284 **	0.310 **
1 Parent: Not Biological	0.084	-0.183	0.083	-0.180	0.196	-0.068	0.133	-0.125
Parent Gender	-0.172 ***	-0.146 **	-0.188 ***	-0.163 **	-0.171 ***	-0.142 **	-0.141 **	-0.112 *
First Generation	-0.108	-0.179	-0.092	-0.165	-0.129	-0.204	-0.156	-0.231 *
Second Generation	-0.049	-0.131	-0.021	-0.106	-0.062	-0.149	-0.065	-0.150
Chi-Square		628.245 ***		826.730 ***		637.554 ***		702.519 ***
CFI		0.954		0.969		0.926		0.958
TLI		0.968		0.980		0.938		0.966
RMSEA		0.054		0.044		0.049		0.049
Close R-Square		0.160		0.215		0.121		0.202
Warm R-Square		0.216		0.263		0.171		0.264
Personal Religiosity R-Square				0.125				
N		2399		2399		2399		2399

Notes: Reference categories are White, High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\* p&lt; .05    \*\*p&lt; .01    \*\*\*p&lt; .001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 2.3: Relationship Quality on Multiple Religion Measures (with Similar Belief)**

	Mother				Father			
	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>			-0.052 ***	-0.015			-0.038 **	-0.026 *
<b>Adolescent Personal Religiosity</b>			0.269 ***	0.236 ***			0.228 ***	0.200 ***
<b>Similar Belief</b>	0.975 ***	0.603 ***	0.159 ***	0.153 ***	0.885 ***	0.591 ***	0.164 ***	0.191 ***
Female	0.275 ***	0.286 ***	0.103 **	0.070	0.233 **	0.325 ***	-0.383 ***	0.260 ***
Age	-0.056 *	-0.022	-0.042 ***	-0.135 ***	-0.072 *	-0.022	-0.081 ***	-0.157 ***
Black	0.131	0.511 ***	0.037	-0.250 ***	0.172	0.521 ***	-0.150 **	-0.239 ***
Hispanic	0.112	0.030	-0.018	-0.120	0.203	0.016	-0.023	0.043
Other	0.106	0.074	0.003	-0.113	0.121	0.066	-0.168 *	-0.197 *
Mom Works Full Time	0.041	-0.012	0.014	-0.005	0.280 *	0.037	-0.067	-0.083
South	0.428 ***	0.357 ***	-0.039	0.093 *	0.491 ***	0.398 ***	-0.004	0.060
Parent Education:								
Less than High School	-0.017	0.182 *	0.031	0.060	-0.017	0.054	0.109	0.059
Some beyond High School	0.144	-0.067	-0.002	0.141 **	0.138	-0.074	0.029	0.150 **
B.A./B.S. degree or more	0.372 ***	-0.094	-0.080	0.192 ***	0.459 ***	-0.074	0.077	0.227 ***
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.278 **	0.022	0.040	-0.019	-0.123	0.127 *	-0.483 ***	-0.673 ***
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.165	0.015	-0.319 ***	-0.679 ***	-0.323	-0.072	0.676 ***	0.465 ***
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.054	0.094	0.179 *	-0.118	0.119	0.095	-0.150	-0.126
1 Parent: Biological	-0.335 ***	-0.112 *	0.018	0.067	-0.385	-0.211 *	0.295 **	0.319 **
1 Parent: Not Biological	-0.109	0.046	-0.022	-0.023	0.538	0.258	0.157	-0.107
Parent Gender	-0.092	0.025	0.089	0.015	-0.008	0.077	-0.189 ***	-0.158 **
First Generation	-0.018	-0.015	-0.216 *	-0.251 *	-0.321	-0.130	-0.111	-0.187
Second Generation	-0.342 *	-0.207 **	-0.057	-0.125	-0.308	-0.165 *	-0.035	-0.124
Chi-Square				1090.585 ***				863.542 ***
CFI				0.949				0.963
TLI				0.960				0.973
RMSEA				0.042				0.043
Close R-Square				0.185				0.232
Warm R-Square				0.218				0.281
Personal Religiosity R-Square				0.336				0.319
N				3035				2399

Notes: Reference categories are White, High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\* p< .05    \*\*p< .01    \*\*\*p< .001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 2.4: Relationship Quality on Multiple Religion Measures (with Shared Religiosity)**

	Mother				Father			
	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>			-0.063 ***	-0.056 ***			-0.379 ***	-0.059 ***
<b>Adolescent Personal Religiosity</b>			0.289 ***	0.162 **			0.218 ***	0.159 ***
<b>Shared Religiosity</b>	2.028 ***	0.909 ***	0.132	0.306 ***	1.723 ***	0.811 ***	0.190 **	0.268 ***
Female	-0.005	0.138 ***	0.094 **	0.066	0.085	0.223 ***	-0.379 ***	0.253 ***
Age	0.016	0.007	-0.041 ***	-0.127 ***	-0.019	-0.001	-0.080 ***	-0.153 ***
Black	-0.404 ***	0.228 ***	0.011	-0.264 ***	-0.280 *	0.262 ***	-0.178 **	-0.267 ***
Hispanic	-0.223	-0.121	-0.027	-0.146 *	-0.127	-0.141 *	-0.048	0.006
Other	0.049	0.037	-0.007	-0.111	0.046	0.012	-0.182 *	-0.210 *
Mom Works Full Time	0.033	-0.020	0.007	-0.011	0.063	-0.048	-0.070	-0.086
South	0.044	0.163 ***	-0.041	0.089 *	0.091	0.187 ***	-0.013	0.045
Parent Education:								
Less than High School	0.007	0.153	0.011	0.062	-0.295	-0.081	0.083	0.020
Some beyond High School	-0.098	-0.161 ***	-0.009	0.107 *	-0.028	-0.139 **	0.018	0.129 *
B.A./B.S. degree or more	-0.122	-0.293 ***	-0.094	0.124 *	-0.024	-0.283 ***	0.041	0.169 **
2 Parents: Biological Mother	0.154	0.193 ***	0.045	0.014	0.299 **	0.272 ***	-0.457 ***	-0.624 ***
2 Parents: Biological Father	0.640 **	0.349 ***	-0.288 **	-0.556 ***	0.306	0.209 *	0.698 ***	0.520 ***
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.168	0.113	0.162	-0.101	0.084	0.051	-0.158	-0.129
1 Parent: Biological	0.135	0.084	0.020	0.087	-0.027	-0.040	0.293 **	0.318 **
1 Parent: Not Biological	0.285	0.198	-0.021	0.019	0.447	0.150	0.123	-0.127
Parent Gender	-0.177	-0.011	0.084	0.002	0.167	0.150 ***	-0.166 **	-0.128 *
First Generation	-0.316	-0.159	-0.238 *	-0.287	-0.523 *	-0.214	-0.140	-0.228 *
Second Generation	-0.286	-0.163	-0.055	-0.136	-0.335 *	-0.166 *	-0.049	-0.144
Chi-Square				1402.024 ***				1096.463 ***
CFI				0.946				0.959
TLI				0.966				0.974
RMSEA				0.044				0.046
Close R-Square				0.172				0.229
Warm R-Square				0.221				0.282
Personal Religiosity R-Square				0.678				0.609
N				3035				2399

Notes: Reference categories are White, High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\* p&lt; .05    \*\*p&lt; .01    \*\*\*p&lt; .001 (two-tailed tests)

Figure 2.1: General Structural Model

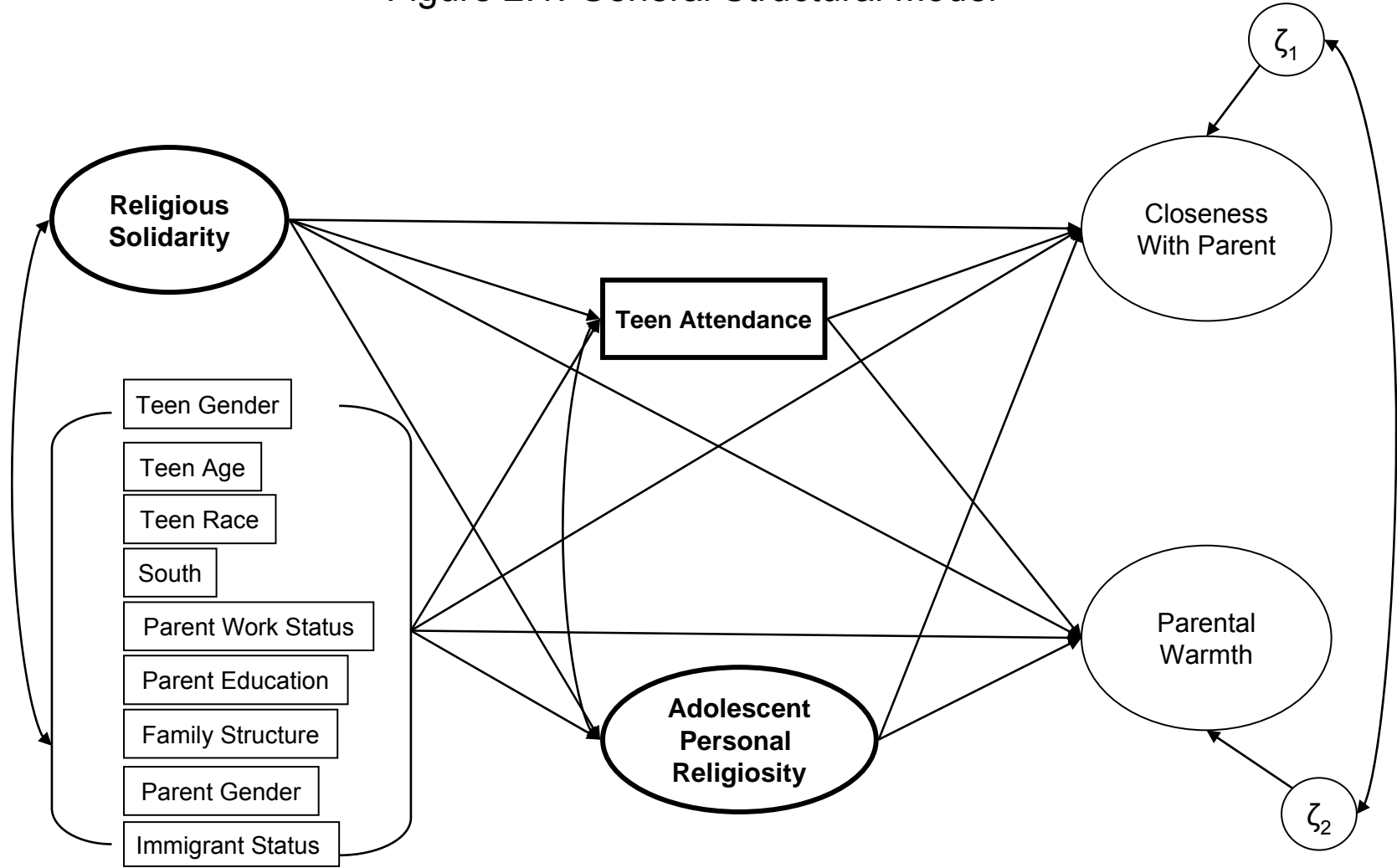
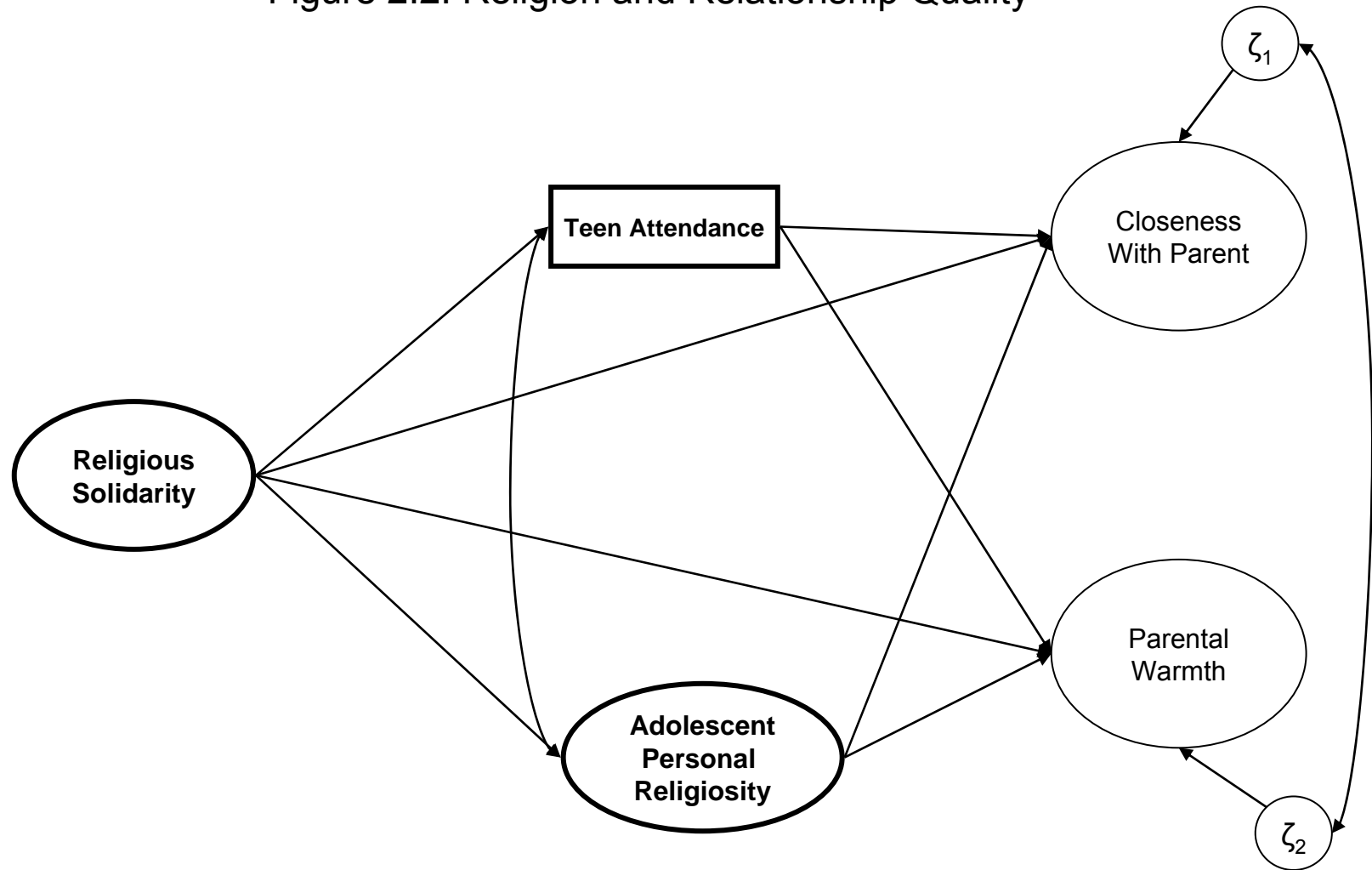


Figure 2.2: Religion and Relationship Quality





## CHAPTER III

### Social Resources, Adolescent Religiosity and Relationship Quality between Parents and Adolescents

Relationship quality between adolescents and their parents has been linked to an array of outcomes for adolescents. A large body of literature finds that better quality parent-child relationships is related to more positive life outcomes such as better self-esteem and life-satisfaction, lower rates of depression, better academic performance and lower rates of risk behavior (e.g. Armsden 1986; Falci 2006; Gecas and Seff 1990; Greenberger and Chen 1996; Ream and Savin-Williams 2005; Webb and Baer 1995). Given that adolescents' relationships with their parents have the potential for such significant impact in their lives, it is important to better understand the factors that contribute to more positive parent-child relationships.

In Chapter Two, I examined religion as one such factor related to parent-adolescent relationship quality. The analyses support the conclusion that religion plays a significant role in the relationship quality of parents and teenagers. The analyses model multiple dimensions of the religious lives of adolescents, including attendance at religious services, the personal religious commitments of teenagers, and the extent of parent-adolescent religious solidarity. In the final models, religious solidarity and personal religiosity were found to be statistically significant and positively related to adolescents' reports of closeness with and warmth from their parents. With these two facets of their religious lives accounted

for, however, the path from frequency of religious service attendance to parent-adolescent relationship quality was negative or not statistically significant. In this chapter, I build on the findings from Chapter Two by identifying additional factors that might be mediating the relationship between adolescent religiosity and parent-child relationship quality.

### *Religion and Life Outcomes*

The finding that religiosity contributes to better quality parent-child relationship quality is consistent with a wide range of research that links religion to positive life outcomes for both adults and adolescents. Among adults, religion has been linked to greater marital happiness and marital stability (Call and Heaton 1997; Filsinger and Wilson 1984) and greater volunteer and community service activity (Wilson and Janoski 1995). There is also a large literature connecting religion with physical and mental health and well-being (Sherkat and Ellison 1999). Religious individuals have been found to report lower levels of depression (Garrison et al. 2004; Schnittker 2001), reduced life stress (Ellison et al. 2001) and lower rates of substance use (Koenig et al. 1994). Religion has also been linked to higher survival rates and quicker recovery from serious illness as well as lower mortality rates (George, Ellison, and Larson 2002).

A wealth of literature demonstrates the myriad ways in which religion appears to guide and influence the lives of adolescents. The religious commitments of adolescents have been found to be a protective factor against delinquency and risk behaviors (Cochran 1993; Cochran and Akers 1989; Smith and Faris 2003a; Wallace and Forman 1998). Adolescent religiosity has also been positively related to higher self-esteem, more positive life attitudes, and more constructive social behaviors, while inversely related to depression, suicide

ideation, and suicide attempts (Donahue and Benson 1995; Smith and Faris 2003a; Smith and Faris 2003b; Wright, Frost, and Wisecarver 1993). In addition to being less likely to engage in risk behaviors, Wallace and Forman (1998) discovered that religious youth are more likely to engage in activities that are beneficial to their health, such as exercise, eating properly, and getting enough rest. And on the educational front, two recent studies provide evidence about the ways in which youth religious participation may improve academic outcomes (Regnerus 2000; Regnerus and Elder 2003).

In an effort to move forward our theoretical understanding of the role religion plays in people's lives, many studies have sought to uncover potential mediating variables that help to explain the effects of religion on various outcomes. The identification of mediating variables contributes to the specification of mechanisms by which religion operates in the lives of adherents. By identifying these mechanisms, we can begin to address the "how" and "why" questions about the persistent relationships found between religion and life outcomes.

George et al. (2002, p. 190) explain it this way,

Religion is not universally palatable. If, however, the "active ingredients" by which religion promotes health can be established, it may be possible to provide them in ways that are acceptable to people unwilling to participate in religion.

Recent theoretical work by Smith (2003) provides one such framework for understanding the role of religion in people's lives, in particular in the lives of adolescents. According to Smith, social scientists will be well served by seeking to understand the multidimensional and interrelated nature of the phenomena being studied. With regard to religion, this means exploring the mechanisms by which religion may operate to influence life outcomes, while acknowledging that there may be something particular about religious influence that can't be reduced to other non-religious factors. Smith presents a series of interrelated hypotheses to

explain the well-established connection between religion and positive youth outcomes. He offers nine theoretical hypotheses grouped under three larger dimensions of social influence and suggests that these hypotheses serve as a call to empirical examination, an encouragement to explore the validity of his hypotheses in an effort to better understand the role of religion in the lives of youth. One of these hypotheses proposes that religion influences the lives of adolescents through the social resources garnered from religious involvement.

### *Social Resources*

Social support is a concept that has been defined and operationalized in multiple ways. In their review of the religion and health literature, George et al. (2002) provide an overview of four dimensions of social support that are commonly agreed upon in this literature: 1. Structural characteristics of the support network, including size and nature of the relationships, 2. Social interaction, 3. Instrumental assistance, and 4. Subjective social support. The final dimension refers to an individual's assessment of the social support available to them and is sometimes referred to as perceived social support. While social interaction is the most frequently examined dimension, according to these authors it is the subjective dimension that has been the most consistent and powerful predictor of health outcomes.

The first dimension of social support, the structural characteristics of the support network, is closely related to the concept of social capital. Like social support, social capital has been defined in many ways and measured in many more (Morrow 1999). Paxton (1999) defines social capital as consisting of objective associations between individuals that are

characterized by positive and trusting relationships. A measure of social capital using this definition would look very similar to a measure of the structural dimension of social support: the number of social ties in an individual's network and the positive, supportive nature of those ties. For the purpose of clarity, I will use the term social capital to refer to positive, trusting network ties. The term social support will be used in reference to the remaining three dimensions outlined by George et al. (2002).

Previous research among both youth and adults has shown that religion and religious involvement are important sources of both social support (George et al. 2002) and social capital (Sherkat and Ellison 1999). According to Taylor and Chatters "the expressed goals and purposes of the church...are to provide fellowship, spiritual sustenance, and to ensure the mental and physical well-being of those members in need." Membership in a religious community provides individuals access to a community of like-minded individuals, and this may have significant benefits in the area of giving and receiving social support. Research by Ellison and George (1994) found that frequent church attenders have larger and more extended non-kin networks, benefit from more supportive interactions, and are more likely to report feeling cared for, valued, and part of a supportive community than non-attenders. In addition to access to extended non-kin networks of positive social ties, religious institutions often provide more formal social support through pastoral care, church programs aimed at assisting church members facing various life stresses, and social service programs (Ellison and George 1994).

The social support experienced within religious communities has the potential to contribute to individuals' well-being in a number of ways. Social support has been linked to a number of positive life outcomes including better physical and emotional health and well-

being, longer life expectancy, and improved family relationships (Jang and Johnson 2004; Kurdek 1989; Ross and Mirowsky ). Among adolescents, the benefits of social support and social capital are also well-documented. Social support contributes to improved parenting practices among adolescent mothers (Voight, Hans, and Bernstein 1996), as well as relationship quality and general well-being among pregnant adolescents (Stevenson and Maton ). In the social capital research, we find that higher levels of social capital among adolescents are associated with academic achievement, socioeconomic success, positive youth development, and improved mental and physical health (Coleman 1988; Furstenberg and Hughes 1995; King and Furrow 2004; Morrow 1999; Wright et al. 1993).

Given the link from religion to social support and social capital, and the link from social support and social capital to positive life outcomes for both youth and adults, these concepts have been theorized as potential mechanisms by which religion might influence the lives of its adherents. As one of his theories about religious effects among adolescents, presented under the broad heading of Social and Organizational Ties, Smith (2003, p. 25) says this about social capital:

American religion is one of the few, major American social institutions that is not rigidly age stratified and emphasizes personal interactions over time, thus providing youth with personal access to other adult members in their religious communities, affording cross-generational network ties with the potential to provide extra-familial, trusting relationships of care and accountability, and linking youth to wider sources of helpful information, resources, and opportunities. . . All this helps foster and reinforce . . . positive, constructive life choices and behaviors.

A number of studies have begun to explore this idea and provide a model for how social support and social capital might be conceptualized as mediators of religious influence.

Earlier I discussed the established link between religiosity and better physical and mental health. The religion and health literature is one area where the potential mediating effect of

social support has begun to be examined (see George et al. 2002 for a review). This work calls for further research, but provides evidence that this is an avenue worth exploring. In regards to physical health, research by Krause and Wulff (2005) demonstrated that church-based social support was positively associated with physical health. Ferraro and Koch (1994) found that social support explained 25 percent of the relationship between religious participation and physical health for African Americans, although it was not a significant mediator for Whites. In the area of mental health and well-being, Ellison and colleagues (2001) examined the role of social support in the relationship between religion and psychological distress among Detroit-area adults. While social support has been found to inversely related to psychological distress, they did not find it to be a significant mediating factor with regard to the religious effects on distress. In contrast to the findings by Ellison et al. (2001), however, Eliassen et al. (2005) find that social support explains the link between religion and depression among a sample of young adults. In a test of Smith's (2003) theory about religious influence operating through increased social support, Jang and Johnson (2004) examine the mediating effect of social support in the relationship between religion and distress among African Americans. They find that religious African Americans report less distress than their nonreligious counterparts and that this relationship is explained in part by the increased levels of social support they experience. Yet another study found evidence for social support as a mediator between religion and both physical and mental health measures among African American women (Olphen et al. 2003). The above studies indicate that, at least among adults, social support does appear to have some role in the positive association between religion and health.

One area where social capital has been found to be important specifically in the lives of young people is that of positive youth development. Multiple studies have established that youth religiosity is positively related to pro-social behaviors, attitudes and moral development and inversely related to risk behaviors (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1989; Donahue and Benson 1995; Jessor, Turbin, and Costa 1998; Regnerus 2003; Smith and Faris 2003a). Similar to the trend in the religion and health literature, a number of studies have begun to explore potential mechanisms that might help explain religion's role in the development of adolescents and have also identified social support and social capital as potential factors (Furrow, King, and White 2004; King and Furrow 2004; Wagener et al. 2003). King and Furrow suggest that there is a need for models that conceptualize the social as well as the personal influence of religiousness; they test and find support for "the idea that religion's association with moral development can be understood in part through the social resources associated with religion" (2004, p. 704).

### *Theoretical Model*

Following in the model of the work described above, this paper seeks to explore the concepts of social support and social capital as potential mediating factors in the link between adolescent religion and the quality of relationships between youth and their parents. As was theorized by Smith (2003) and supported in the research described earlier, social support and social capital appear to be important dimensions of religion and its influence on various outcomes in people's lives. While much of this research has focused on adults and the support networks they experience in religious congregations, there is some evidence that adolescents also benefit from the social support and network ties they have access to through



their religious communities. In particular, religious communities provide access to intergenerational relationships that can serve as important resources for adolescents (King and Furrow 2004; Scales et al. 2000; Smith 2003). In addition, the shared values and common worldviews that often characterize relationships with coreligionists contribute to the salience and supportive nature of these relationships (Ellison and George 1994; George et al. 2002).

In this chapter, I suggest that the benefits of religious social support might also extend to the quality of relationships between teenagers and their parents. The existing literature on parent-teenage relationship quality does not directly address this issue. However, the research we do have about these relationships, along with research in other subfields, points toward some theoretical expectations about social support and social capital as mechanisms of religious influence. Previous research has established a link between social support and family relationships: several studies have found social support to be an influential factor in the relationship quality among married couples and romantic partners (Elizur and Mintzer 2003; Kurdek 1989; Robertson et al. 1991) and another group of researchers have linked social support to positive parenting practices (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, and Ungar 2005; Leinonen, Solantaus, and Punamaki 2003; Voight et al. 1996). Adults and adolescents certainly experiences different types of social support through their religious involvements. However, it seems reasonable to expect that if social support and social capital shape the ways adults relate to their partners and their children, it might also influence the ways in which children relate to and perceive their relationships with their parents.

While the popular view of adolescence as a period of “storm and stress” has come under question, adolescence is certainly a time of transition in the parent-child relationship. As

children get older and gain more responsibility and independence, parents and children engage in the process of re-negotiating the terms of the relationship (Steinberg and Silk 2002). Adolescence is also a critical time in the religious lives of youth. Increased cognitive and social autonomy from their parents brings many teenagers to a crossroad of having to decide which of their parent's religious, moral and social values they will adopt as their own (Mahoney 2005). These choices can lead to greater solidarity within the parent-child relationship as they adopt the worldviews passed on to them from their parents, or they may lead to increased levels of conflict as they put more distance between themselves and their parents' beliefs and commitments.

Religious communities have the potential to play a significant role in this process that can profoundly shape the future of the relationship between the parent and adolescent. A religious community may serve the relationships of adolescents and their parents by providing a helpful environment in which to navigate the changing complexion of these relationships. Involvement in a supportive religious community, particularly a religious community shared with parents, can provide teenagers with a "plausibility structure" (Berger 1967) that serves to reinforce not only the religious commitments of their parents, but also any religious teachings about the value of family relationships. Adolescents who adopt the beliefs and teachings of their religious communities, including the pursuit of positive relationships with their parents, may experience increased affirmation and encouragement from this plausibility structure. As an adolescent embraces the beliefs of their religious community and becomes integrated into the community, the community becomes a stronger reference group, with the adolescent more likely identify with their coreligionists and perceive their input as supportive (Ellison and George 1994). It is also possible that a

supportive religious community provides adolescents with a positive view of adults in general that carries over into their perception of their parents.

Social capital in the form of ties to supportive adults also has the potential to bolster relationships between parents and teenagers. These adults may serve as role models for adolescents, offering encouragement or an alternative perspective during confusing or difficult times in the parent-child relationship. Teenagers who have positive experiences interacting with adults throughout their lives may be better prepared to enter into mature relationships with their parents during adolescence. These relationships with other adults may help them see things through the perspective of the “other,” and learning the skill of this type of perspective taking can facilitate smoother interactions with parents. In addition, supportive adult ties serve as additional resources in a young person’s life. Access to additional resources may reduce the risk of an overtaxed relationship between a parent and child. For example, adults can offer support by teaching life skills or spending quality time with the adolescent. To the extent that these activities add to and do not substitute for important parental interaction, they can increase the adolescent’s access to an adult presence in his or her life without overburdening the parent-child relationship.

### *Hypotheses*

In examining social support as a potential mediator between adolescent religion and relationship quality with parents, I focus on the subjective dimension of social support – the extent to which adolescents perceive their religious congregations to be supportive. I expect that teenagers with higher levels of personal religious commitment will have more positive perceptions of coreligionists and their religious congregations. In turn, teenagers who

perceive their religious congregation to be a positive and supportive environment will garner more benefits from their involvement in the religious community than those who do not have such a positive view. As stated above, I use the term social capital to refer to positive, trusting network ties. In examining social capital as a potential mediator between adolescents' religion and relationship quality with their parents, I focus on the number of supportive adult ties available to the teenagers in my study. I expect that both of these concepts, social support and social capital, will be positively related to the quality of the relationship that teenagers report having with their parents. These expectations lead to the following hypotheses:

H1: Teenagers who report higher levels of personal religiosity will be more likely to report higher levels of subjective social support in religious congregations.

H2: Teenagers who report higher levels of subjective social support will also report higher levels of closeness and warmth with mothers and fathers.

H3: Teenagers who report higher levels of personal religiosity will report more supportive adult ties.

H4: Teenagers who report more supportive adult ties will also report higher levels of closeness and warmth with mothers and fathers.

In keeping with Smith's (2003) theoretical framework, I conceptualize religion and religious influence as multidimensional, with social resources being part of these many dimensions of religion. Given this multifaceted approach, I do not expect that any one measurable mechanism will be able to fully explain the influence of religion in a given area of people's lives. Therefore, while I expect that social support and social capital are important factors in the religion-relationship quality connection, I do not expect them to fully mediate this relationship. Instead, I suggest the following hypothesis:

H5: The direct effects of personal religiosity on relationship closeness and relationship warmth will be partially mediated through subjective social support and social capital.

## *Data and Methods*

### Data Source

This study uses data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The quantitative component of this data is the National Survey of Youth and Religion (NSYR). This is a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 U.S. English and Spanish speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, and of one of their parents. The NSYR also includes 80 oversampled Jewish households, bringing the total number of completed NSYR cases to 3,370. The NSYR was conducted from July, 2002 to April, 2003 by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill using a random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey method, employing a sample of randomly generated telephone numbers representative of all household telephones in the 50 United States. The national survey sample was arranged in replicates based on the proportion of working household telephone exchanges nationwide. This RDD method ensures equal representation of listed, unlisted, and not-yet-listed household telephone numbers. Eligible households included at least one teenager between the ages of 13-17 living in the household for at least six months of the year. In order to randomize responses within households, and so to help attain representativeness of age and gender, interviewers asked to conduct the survey with the teenager in the household who had the most recent birthday. The NSYR was conducted with members of both English and Spanish speaking households. Participants were offered a financial incentive to participate. All randomly generated telephone numbers were dialed a minimum of 20 times over a minimum of five months per number, spread out over varying hours during week days, week nights, and weekends. The calling design included at least two telephone-based attempts to convert refusals. Households refusing to cooperate with the

survey but established by initial screening to include children ages 13 to 17 in residence and with telephone numbers able to be matched to mailing addresses were also sent by mail information about the survey, contact information for researchers, and a request to cooperate and complete the survey; those records were then called back again for possible refusal conversions. Ninety-six percent of parent complete households also achieved teenager completes. Diagnostic analyses comparing NSYR data with 2002 U.S. Census data on comparable households and with comparable adolescent surveys---such as Monitoring the Future, the National Household Education Survey, and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health---confirm that the NSYR provides a nationally representative sample without identifiable sampling and nonresponse biases of U.S. teenagers ages 13-17 and their parents living in households (for details, see Smith and Denton 2003). For descriptive purposes, a weight was created to adjust for number of teenagers in household, number of household telephone numbers, census region of residence, and household income. The 80 Jewish oversample cases are omitted from this analysis.

In this analysis, the focus is on how teenagers who are affiliated with a religious congregation evaluate their congregations with regard to various dimensions of congregational social support. Therefore, the analysis is limited to the 2,182 teenage respondents who report that they attend church more than just a few times a year.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Teenage respondents were asked “How often do you attend religious services, NOT counting weddings, baptisms, or funerals?” Response categories were: 0=Never, 1=A few times a year, 2=Many times a year, 3=Once a month, 4=2-3 times a month, 5=Once a week, 6=More than once a week. Respondents who answered “Never” or “A few times a year” were not asked follow-up questions about their religious congregations. Those respondents are excluded from this analysis.

### Limitations of Cross-sectional Data

One important issue that must be recognized with this analysis is that it employs cross-sectional data. Cross-sectional data inherently limits causal explanations about the relationships found in the analyses. According to Regnerus and Smith (2005), scholars are cautious about attributing causation to observed associations, and this is a particular concern with regards to religion. Claims that religion influences other aspects of social life have drawn skepticism<sup>2</sup> and the associations between religion and outcomes have been attributed instead to selection effects. In my analysis, there is the possibility that any relationship between religion and the quality of parent-child relationships is the result of some underlying, unmeasured variable that influences both an individual's propensity to be religious and their ability to maintain quality family relationships. There is also the possibility of endogeneity as a result of a reciprocal relationship between religion and relationship quality. These are issues of concern to not only my specific analysis, but to the larger first-wave project of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) of which my research is a part.

In an attempt to address this issue, Regnerus and Smith (2005) have conducted analysis using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Through analysis of longitudinal data, they conclude that while effects of religion variables do appear to be endogenous, the endogeneity does not eliminate independent religious effects. Instead, the effect of endogeneity on any given model of religious influence are limited and do not warrant entirely dismissing the religious effects as "selection effects." Their findings do not

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<sup>2</sup> Stark (2000) suggests that generations of social scientists "have embraced a strange doctrine," namely that they "prefer to trace all religious phenomena to *material* causes and are quick to deny the possibility that religion is the real cause of anything."

eliminate the need to be cautious in the interpretation of associations found in cross-sectional data. It does, however, suggest that there is value to continuing to examine questions about religious influence, even when the best available data are cross-sectional.

While acknowledging the limitations of cross-section data, I also rely on theoretical logic to inform my understanding of the direction of causation among the variables in my analysis. Theoretical arguments suggest that while there may be some reciprocity between religion and relationship quality, there is strong reason to believe that religion has a causal influence on relationship quality that would not be explained away by reverse causation or selection effects. One goal of my analysis, then, is to construct models that are consistent with theoretical expectations. The extent to which the models presented here correctly model that which we expect based on these theoretical understandings will inform our ability to make qualified and cautious causal inferences.

A second goal of my analysis is to lay the groundwork for future analyses. The cross-sectional data used here are part of a larger, longitudinal project. The data from second and third waves of this project are not yet available for analysis. However, in the future, I will be able to use these longitudinal data to further explore the relationship between religion and relationship quality and make stronger claims about endogeneity, reciprocity, and causal direction.

### Analysis

The models in this chapter will be analyzed using Structural Equation Models (SEM). We know that even the best data are not able to measure concepts perfectly. SEM accounts for potential measurement error in the models by including error terms in the analysis. In



addition, concepts such as relationship quality and religiosity are complex, and not accurately measured by a single indicator. To address this, my structural equation models include latent variables that allow underlying concepts to be measured using multiple indicators. SEM also allows me to account for potential mediating variables by assessing both the direct and indirect effects of variables in the models. Finally, the use of SEM allows me to correct for the categorical nature of my latent concept indicator variables. By using a polychoric correlation matrix, SEM measures propensities that are more consistent with categorical variables and thus avoids the problem of treating these variables as continuous.

### *Measures<sup>3</sup>*

#### Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for these analyses are measures of the quality of the parent-child relationship. Reports about the quality of this relationship were provided by both the parent and adolescent survey respondents. In response to the existing gaps in the literature, the primary focus of this analysis will be to understand how adolescents' religiosity influences their perceptions and reports about their relationships with their parents.

Surveyed teenagers were asked a series of questions about the mother figure and father figure residing in their household. The survey did not include questions about non-residential parents, so this analysis is limited to residential parents or parent figures. This gives us a picture of the relationships teenagers are involved with on a daily basis in their place of residence, a measure of the quality of relationships in the daily social context of the home. Teenagers were first asked about their mother or resident mother figure, and then

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<sup>3</sup> Results for the measurement models of all latent variables are provided in Appendix B.

asked the same series of questions about their father or resident father figure.<sup>4</sup> From these questions, I have created two measures of relationship quality, *relationship closeness* and *relationship warmth*. Each of these two concepts is measured as a separate latent variable for both mother and father. In previous analyses, I found adolescent religiosity to be related to both the closeness and warmth dimensions of the parent-child relationship.

Relationship closeness is constructed as a latent variable consisting of four indicators: closeness, getting along, communication, and hanging out. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. How close or not close do you feel to your mother/father?<sup>5</sup> Extremely close, Very close, Fairly close, Somewhat close, Not very close, or Not close at all?
2. Generally, how well do you and your mother/father get along? Extremely well, Very well, Fairly well, Not so well, Pretty poorly, or Very badly?
3. How often do you talk with your mother/father about personal subjects, such as friendships, dating, or drinking? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?
4. How often, if at all, do you and your mother/father just have fun hanging out and doing things together? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

Relationship warmth is constructed as a latent variable consisting of three indicators: expression of love, affection, and praise. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. How often does your mother/father tell you that s/he loves you?
2. How often does your mother/father hug you?
3. How often does your mother/father praise and encourage you?

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<sup>4</sup> The questions were asked of the resident mother and father figures. This could include a parent, step-parent, grandparent, legal guardian, etc. Throughout the paper, the term “mother” and “father” will be used, however, these terms are meant to include all resident parental figures.

<sup>5</sup> The CATI program used to administer the survey was programmed to insert the appropriate term in place of “mother” or “father”, such as “mother”, “step-mother”, “grandmother”, “father’s partner”, etc.

### Independent Variables

There are a variety of factors related to the quality of relationships between teenagers and their parents. As adolescents get older and move through the stages of early, middle and late adolescence, relationships with parents may become more strained, therefore I control for the age of the teenager.<sup>6</sup> I also control for the sex of the teenager (female=1) to account for differences between relationships with a same-sex or opposite-sex parent. In addition, all models control for the race of the teenager (black, white, Hispanic and other), residence in the South, and the gender of the parent survey respondent.

The employment status of the parent is also a factor that has been linked with the quality of parent-child relationships. I include an indicator of whether or not the focal parent is working full-time. In models measuring relationship quality with mothers, an indicator of the mother's employment status is included. In models for father relationship quality, I use an indicator of father's employment status.

Education has also been linked to parenting style and parent-child relationships (Dornbusch 1989; Hilliard 1996). The NSYR survey contains measures of the education of both the resident mother and the resident father, if applicable. However, including controls for both the education of the mother and the education of the father may be counter-productive, given that these would likely be similar and any education effect may disappear if both are included in the model. Some analyses use the education level of the father as the proxy variable for parent education. However, a significant portion of the teenagers surveyed do not have a residential father figure. So to avoid missing data in the case of

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<sup>6</sup> Age of adolescent is a continuous variable calculated based on number of days from their date of birth to the date of completion of the survey divided by 365.25 to obtain exact age in years. For 10 cases, teenagers reported their age instead of their date of birth. In these cases numerical age was used.

single parents, I measure education as the highest level of parent education in the household. This approach also provides a more accurate measure of the potential educational resources of the household in cases where the mother has higher education levels than the father in the household. The measure of parental education is divided into five dummy variables: no parent has high school diploma; at least one parent has a high school diploma; at least one parent has some post-secondary education (but no college degree); and at least one parent has a four-year college degree or greater. The analysis of education in categorical terms will enable me to examine thresholds of significance for parental education.

In his review of the study of adolescence, Dornbusch (1989) calls for more studies that examine the role of family structure in family behaviors and relationships. We would expect that the family disruption characteristic of non-intact family types may lead to strained relationships between teenagers and their parents. In addition, we know that teenagers' relationships with biological parents can differ significantly from their relationships with step-parents or other non-biological parent figures. To account for the variation in relationship quality across various family structures, I have created family structure indicator variables. The indicator variables were created from a series of questions asked of the parent respondent about the family relationships in the household. These questions included: current marital status of the parent respondent, their relationship to the teen, their spouse or cohabiting partner's relationship to the teen, and the sex of their partner (if living with an unmarried partner). Using the answers to these questions, I created a series of nineteen possible family types. These nineteen were collapsed into six groups of family types: 1. Two-parent biological (includes biological, adoptive and cohabiting), 2. Two-parents with biological mother and step-father, 3. Two-parents with biological father and step-mother, 4.

Two-parent other (includes legal guardians and foster parents), 5. Single-parent related (biological, adoptive or grandparent), 6. Single-parent other (step- or foster parent, legal guardian, etc).

Research has also linked the quality of relationships between parents and children to immigrant generation (Harker 2001; Willgerodt and Thompson 2005). In order to control for this, I include measures for immigrant status. First generation teenagers are those who report that they were born outside of the United States and were not U.S. citizens at birth. Second generation teenagers were born in the U.S. but have at least one parent who was not born in the U.S. and was not born as a U.S. citizen in another country. Indicator variables for these two groups are included in all of the models, with all other respondents serving as the reference category.

The mediating variables of interest in this analysis are measures of the ties that teenagers have with adults in their religious congregations. Therefore, I include a final control variable in these models to account for differences in teenagers' overall comfort level interacting with non-family adults. Adolescent respondents were asked, "In general, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you talking to adults other than your parents or relatives?" Answer categories ranged from 1 – very uncomfortable to 6 – very comfortable. By including this control variable, I am able to reduce the likelihood that the social ties between teenagers and the adults in their congregation are the result of personality differences or other factors that make them more likely to interact with adults in the first place.

## Religion Measures

The measurement of religion is a complex task. There are multiple facets of religiosity that have the potential to operate in different ways and through different mechanisms, as described above. In Chapter Two, I explored three different measures of religion: religious service attendance, personal religiosity, and parent-adolescent religious solidarity. This analysis focuses on the social support and social capital that teenagers have access to through their involvement in a religious congregation. Since the sample is limited to those respondents who attend a religious congregation, the models will not include an additional measure of religious service attendance. Instead, I will focus on the other two dimensions of religiosity explored in Chapter Two: parent-adolescent religious solidarity and adolescent personal religious commitment.

*Adolescent personal religiosity* is a latent variable with six indicators: importance of faith in daily life, importance of faith in major life decisions, closeness to God, commitment to live life for God, frequency of prayer, and frequency of scripture reading. These indicators are operationalized by the following survey questions:

1. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping how you live your daily life? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
2. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping your major life decisions? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
3. How distant or close do you feel to God most of the time? (0=do not believe in God, 1=extremely distant, 2=very distant, 3=somewhat distant, 4=somewhat close, 5=very close, 6=extremely close)
4. Have you ever made a personal commitment to live your life for God? (0=no, 1=yes)
5. How often, if ever, do you pray by yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6=About once a day, 7=many times a day)

6. How often, if ever, do you read from the [Scriptures] to yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6=About once a day, 7=many times a day)

The level of religious solidarity between parents and teenagers is measured as a function of shared beliefs using a single variable constructed from answers to survey questions about similarity of religious beliefs. Religious teenagers were asked, “Would you say that your own religious beliefs are very similar, somewhat similar, somewhat different or very different from your mother / father?” Teenagers who did not identify themselves as religious were asked, “Would you say that your own beliefs about religion are very similar, somewhat similar, somewhat different or very different from your mother / father?” These questions capture the degree to which teens perceive themselves to have beliefs that are similar to their parents. In order to distinguish generic similarity of belief from particularly religious shared belief, I have combined the response from these two questions into a single variable, similar belief, with the following categories:

- 0 = Non-religious teenagers and religious teenagers with beliefs that are somewhat different or very different from mother / father
- 1 = Religious teenagers with beliefs that are somewhat similar to mother / father
- 2 = Religious teenagers with beliefs that are very similar to mother / father

This coding scheme represents the extent to which teenagers who hold religious beliefs perceive these beliefs to be similar to their parents.

### Social Support

The social support measure is a latent variable with four indicators. I use four survey questions as indicators of the teenagers’ subjective assessment of the supportive nature of their religious congregation. The first question is “When you think about most of the adults

in your religious congregation, how easy or hard are they to talk with and get to know.”

Answer categories ranged from 1 – “very hard to talk with” to 5 – “very easy to talk with.”

The second question is “Are there adults in your religious congregation, other than family members, who you enjoy talking with or who give you lots of encouragement?” The third question is “How good or not good a place is your religious congregation to go if you wanted to talk about serious issues like family problems, alcohol, or troubles at school?” These answer choices ranged from 1 – “A bad place to go for help about serious issues” to 5 – “A very good place to go for help about serious issues.” The final question is “Does your religious congregation feel like a warm and welcoming place for you, usually, sometimes, rarely or never?” I expect that adolescents who perceive their religious congregations to be good sources of social support will answer these four questions more positively.

### Social Capital

In the survey, teenage respondents are asked to identify the total number of adults, other than their parents, that they can turn to when they need support, advice or help. Positive relationships with adults who can be trusted to help in times of need serve as a source of social capital for the respondents. As a measure of network size, the total number of adults nominated by the teenager serves as an indicator of social capital.

### *Results*

Figure 3.1 shows the general model framing these analyses. Accounting for the control variables mentioned above, the model is designed to test whether social capital and social support mediate the relationship between the religious lives of adolescents and the quality of



relationship with their parents. The general structural model presented in Chapter Two found that adolescent personal religiosity has a positive direct effect on reports of relationship closeness and warmth. In the model presented here, in addition to the direct path from religiosity to relationship quality, I include an indirect path through social support and social capital. This will allow me to test how much of the total effect of religiosity on relationship quality is mediated by these indirect paths.

Table 3.1 shows the results for all the models for adolescent relationships with mothers. The results for fathers are shown in Table 3.2. Model 1 in each table serves as the baseline model (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3). This model is very similar to the models presented in Chapter Two. However, rather than including attendance as a variable in the model, this model (and all models in this chapter) is limited to teenagers who are affiliated with a religious congregation – those who report that they attend religious services more than just a few times a year. As was established in Chapter Two, we see again in this chapter that adolescent personal religiosity and similarity of religious belief between parent and child are both positively related to relationship closeness and warmth. In addition to the direct effects, similarity of belief also operates indirectly through a positive path to adolescent personal religiosity.

In Model 2 (see Figures 3.4 and 3.5), social support is included as a potential mediating variable between personal religiosity and relationship quality. In support of H1, respondents who report higher levels of personal religious commitment are more likely to describe their religious congregations in positive and supportive terms. In the models for both mothers and fathers, the path from adolescent personal religiosity to perceived congregational social support is statistically significant at the 0.001 level and has a positive coefficient. Higher

levels of perceived congregational social support are in turn significantly and positively related to better quality relationships with mothers and fathers. In the model for mothers, the paths from social support to closeness and warmth are statistically significant at the 0.05 level and 0.01 level respectively. In the model for fathers, the paths from social support to closeness and warmth are each positive and significant at the 0.001 level. These results offer support for H2, suggesting that higher levels of perceived congregational social support are associated with better quality relationships between adolescents and their parents.

Model 3 (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7) includes a measure of social capital (supportive adults) as a mediating variable between personal religiosity and relationship closeness and warmth with mothers and fathers. The pattern for social capital is similar to that for social support and consistent with H3 and H4. Adolescent personal religiosity is positively and significantly related to the number of adult ties reported by the respondent. It appears that teenagers who report higher levels of personal religiosity also experience more social capital in the form of positive ties to supportive adults in their lives.<sup>7</sup> Similar to social support, social capital in the form of ties to adults is also positively related to the measures of relationship quality. For both mothers and fathers, the paths from social capital to closeness and warmth are positive and statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

I expect that teenagers' subjective assessment of the support they receive from the adults in their congregations is correlated with the number of positive ties they have with adults, many of whom are coreligionists. In order to assess whether or not this correlation has an impact on the individual roles of these two variables in the model, the final model in Tables

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<sup>7</sup> On average, 48 percent of the adult ties reported by teenage respondents are also affiliated with a religious group that the respondent is involved in.

3.1 and 3.2 include both the social support and social capital measures. Figures 3.8 and 3.9 illustrate Model 4 for mothers and fathers respectively. Adolescent personal religiosity continues to be positively and significantly related to both social support and social capital for mothers and fathers. However, when both measures are included in the model, the coefficient for the path from social support to relationship closeness with mother is reduced and only statistically significant at the 0.1 level. All other paths from social support and social capital to relationship quality remain similar to the corresponding paths in Models 2 and 3. Overall, these results provide consistent support for the first four hypotheses. Adolescents who report higher levels of personal religious commitment are more likely to have a positive assessment of the supportive environment of their religious congregations. They also report higher numbers of supportive adults in their life. In addition, the support they perceive from their congregations and the ties they have with adults in their life appear to bolster their relationships with both their mothers and their fathers.

The final hypothesis, H5, proposes that social support and social capital will partially mediate the positive direct effects of personal religiosity on relationship quality established in Model 1. Returning to the models discussed above, we can assess whether or not social support and social capital operate as mechanisms by which religion influences adolescents' reports of the quality of relationships with their parents. The mediating effect of social support and social capital can be assessed in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. These tables provide calculations of the direct, indirect and total effects of personal religiosity on relationship quality via social support and social capital. To determine the mediating role of social support and social capital, I first assess whether or not each path from religiosity to relationship quality is statistically significant. Second, I calculate the percent of the total

effect that is explained by the mediating measures of social support and social capital. These percentages allow for comparisons of the degree to which social support and social capital are mediating the relationship between religiosity and parent-child relationship quality among church attending teenagers.

Looking at the indirect effects of personal religiosity on relationship quality through social support, we see that all the paths are statistically significant. In other words, social support is a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between religion and parent-child relationship quality. In the mother-child relationship models, the indirect effects of religiosity on closeness through social support do not reach significance levels greater than 0.05, but in all the other models, the joint indirect effects are significant at the 0.01 or 0.001 level.<sup>8</sup> The same is true for social capital as a mediating variable. In each model, the joint indirect effects of religion on relationship quality via social capital are statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

The indirect paths of personal religiosity operating through congregational social support and social capital do not entirely remove the direct effect of personal religiosity on relationship quality. In most models, even when accounting for the mediating effects of congregational social support and social capital, the personal religious commitment of teenagers continues to have a strong positive relationship to parent-teenager closeness and warmth. Exceptions to this are found in the models for father-child relationships. The indirect path of adolescent religiosity operating through congregational social support reduces the direct effect of adolescent religiosity on relationship closeness and warmth. In

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<sup>8</sup> In the case of the path from religiosity to closeness with mother via social support in Model 4, the path from social support to closeness is not significant. Therefore the total indirect effect in this case (statistically significant at the 0.1 level) should be interpreted with caution.

Models 2 and 4, the coefficients for the direct effect are much lower than in the in the control model, Model 1, and they are significant at the 0.05 level rather than the 0.001 level. In the case of Model 4, the direct effect of religiosity on closeness in father-child relationships is no longer statistically significant when both social support and social capital are included in the model.

The final two columns in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 quantify the extent to which congregational social support and social capital mediate the link between adolescent personal religiosity and relationship quality among teenagers affiliated with a religious congregation. Both social support and social capital appear to be positive mediators in this relationship. However, it appears that social support is a more salient mechanism through which religion operates in these parent-child relationships. Whether modeled separately or together, social support consistently accounts for larger percentages of the total effects than social capital. In Model 2, social support explains 18 percent of the religion-closeness path and 38 percent of the religion-warmth path for mothers, and 58 percent and 45 percent of these paths for fathers. In Model 3, social capital represents just five and 11 percent of those paths respectively for mothers and eight percent for each path among fathers. Looking at Model 4 for mothers, we see that social support accounts for 15 percent of the path from religiosity to relationship closeness and 33 percent of the total effect on warmth. In contrast, social capital accounts for only five and 10 percent of the total effects, respectively. An even larger difference is found in the Model 4 for fathers, where social support and social capital account for 91

versus nine percent of the total effect on relationship closeness<sup>9</sup> and 43 versus six percent of the total effect on relationship warmth.

While the direct effects of personal religiosity on relationship quality are still statistically significant, the mediating effect of congregational social support in these models appears to be fairly large. It seems that the effect of religiosity on parent-child relationship closeness operates in part through increases in the perceived social support and greater network ties available to teenagers with higher levels of personal religious commitment. The percentages reflected in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 indicate that it is perceived congregational support that provides the majority of this mediating effect. The effect of personal religiosity on adolescents' relationships with their parents appears to operate through the positive assessment of the supportiveness of their congregation to a greater extent than through the actual number of supportive adult ties in their lives. The larger mediating effect of congregational social support as compared to the number of adult ties is not surprising given that this measure is more directly tied to adolescents' experiences in their congregations than the social capital measure of supportive adult ties in their lives, and is therefore more likely to mediate the religious effect. However, the large differences between the mediating effect of subjective social support and the objective measure of social ties are also consistent with previous research that has found the subjective measure of perceived support to be the dimension of social support that is most closely related to other outcomes such as physical and mental health. Taken together, these results provide support for H5, demonstrating that

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<sup>9</sup> Because the direct path from personal religiosity to relationship closeness is not statistically significant, the coefficient is not included in the calculation of total effects. Therefore, the sum of the indirect paths adds up to 100 percent of the total effect. If the coefficient for the direct effect is included in the calculation, the indirect effects of social support and social capital account for 56% and 6% respectively.

social support, and social capital to a lesser degree, operate as specific mechanisms through which religion operates in the relationship quality of parent and adolescents.

### *Discussion*

The findings presented above provide general support for the hypotheses proposed earlier in this chapter. I find support for H1 and H3 across all models. Adolescents who report higher levels of personal religiosity are also significantly more likely to perceive their religious congregations to be supportive. In addition, personal religiosity is significantly related to the number of supportive adults a respondent has in their life. These findings hold true across the models for mother-child as well as father-child relationships. These results are consistent with previous research that finds religion to be a significant source of social support and social capital. This relationship seems to hold true even among adolescents. The exact form of the social resources is likely different for adolescents than for adults, but social support and social capital appear to be important dimensions of religious involvement for adolescents as well as adults.

Consistent with H2 and H4, I find significant coefficients for the paths between social support and relationship quality as well as social capital and relationship quality. Teenagers with a positive view of the supportiveness of their religious congregations are more likely to also report better quality relationships with their mothers and fathers. In addition, the more ties teenagers have to supportive adults in their life, the more likely they are to report positive relationships with their parents. Like other family relationships, adolescents' relationships with their parents appear to benefit from non-family social resources such as those available to them through their religious congregations.

In H5, I proposed that social support and social capital would act as mechanisms by which religion operates to support parent-child relationships and partially mediate the effect of adolescent personal religiosity on the relationship quality measures. In all of the models, the indirect effect of religiosity on relationship quality through the social resources variables is statistically significant, indicating that these variables are in fact mediating factors in this relationship. Social support explains anywhere from 15 to 91 percent of the relationship between personal religiosity and relationship quality. Social capital also operates as a mediating variable, but to a lesser degree. The number of supportive adult ties only explains between five and 11 percent of the total effect of religiosity on relationship quality. In summary, adolescents who report higher levels of personal religious commitment are more likely to have a positive assessment of the supportive environment of their religious congregations. They also report higher numbers of supportive adults in their life. The support they perceive from their congregations and the ties they have with adults in their life appear to bolster their relationships with both their mothers and their fathers. Among adolescents who are affiliated with a religious congregation, personal religious commitments appear to operate both directly and indirectly – through congregational social support and social capital – on the quality of relationship they report having with their mothers and fathers.

These findings contribute to a broader literature that is helping us to better understand religion and the role it plays in the dynamics of family relationships. We see in this analysis that social support and social capital are specific dimensions of more general religious effects. Modeling this indirect effect of religion contributes to theoretical advancement about the influence of religion on life outcomes. It also furthers our understanding of the



mechanisms by which religion operates within the parent-child relationship. The extent to which parent-child relationships benefit from adolescent religiosity is determined in part by the social resources that are available to adolescents through their religious involvement.

The findings in the chapter also contribute to the literature on social support and social capital. Much of the existing research has focused on adults and the benefits they receive from strong social networks and supportive religious congregations. In this chapter, we see that supportive networks, in particular those of a supportive religious congregation, benefit adolescents as well. The broad scope of the literature about social support and social capital in the lives of adults suggests the possibility of extending these research findings beyond the application to relationships with parents in the lives of adolescents. Future research could explore the other ways in which religiously involved teenagers benefit from increased levels of social support and supportive ties to adults in their lives. Additionally, research might extend the findings beyond the scope of religious social support to assess the impact of various sources of social support, both religious and non-religious in nature. An analysis of this type could further clarify the mechanisms at work by specifying the general benefits of social resources as compared to those specific to the social resources available in a religious context. Finally, research in this area should continue to specify the unique dimensions of social resources, clarifying the relative contributions of subjective social support and the objective characteristics of social networks.

These analyses are part of a broader research program seeking to better understand the lives of youth. Given the demonstrated influence that parent-adolescent relationship quality has on so many aspects of adolescent success and well-being, it seems important that researchers, practitioners, and parents alike are able to better understand the factors that

contribute to healthy parent-child relationships. This research has contributed to what we already know about these relationships by identifying the some of the particular ways in which religion is related to positive parent-adolescent relationship quality.

**Table 3.1: Relationship Quality with Mother - Social Resources and Religion Measures (SEM models for *church attending teens* )**

	Model 1			Model 2	
	Close	Warm	Support	Close	Warm
<b>Congregational Social Support</b>				0.109 *	0.190 **
<b>Social Capital (Supportive Adults)</b>					
<b>Personal Religiosity</b>	0.247 ***	0.200 ***	0.398 ***	0.203 ***	0.125 **
<b>Similar Belief</b>	0.143 ***	0.160 ***		0.138 ***	0.157 ***
Comfortable talking with Adults	0.110 ***	0.092 ***	0.104 ***	0.098 ***	0.072 ***
Female	0.105 **	0.094	-0.188 ***	0.125 **	0.129 *
Age	-0.049 ***	-0.145 ***	-0.043 **	-0.044 **	-0.136 ***
Black	0.156 **	-0.164 *	-0.060	0.162 **	-0.152 *
Hispanic	0.124	-0.005	-0.112	0.136	0.016
Other Race	0.081	0.022	-0.041	0.085	0.030
Mom Works Full Time	0.006	0.046	0.021	0.003	0.042
South	-0.007	0.149 **	0.029	-0.011	0.143 **
Parent Ed.: Less than High School	-0.019	-0.084	0.031	-0.022	-0.090
Parent Ed.: Some beyond High School	-0.037	0.073	-0.041	-0.032	0.080
Parent Ed.: B.A./B.S. degree or more	-0.137 *	0.109	-0.079	-0.128 *	0.124
2 Parents: Biological Mother	0.041	-0.067	-0.002	0.041	-0.067
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.368 **	-0.833 ***	-0.080	-0.357 **	-0.817 ***
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.264 *	-0.099	-0.111	0.274 *	-0.077
1 Parent: Biological	0.012	0.039	-0.093	0.022	0.057
1 Parent: Non-biological	0.018	-0.097	0.000	0.018	-0.096
Parent Gender	0.127 *	0.026	-0.010	0.127 *	0.028
First Generation	-0.156	-0.271	-0.349	-0.117	-0.204
Second Generation	0.042	-0.086	-0.083	0.051	-0.070
Chi-Square		707.295 ***			820.427 ***
CFI		0.940			0.941
TLI		0.949			0.950
RMSEA		0.041			0.036
Close R2		0.230			0.236
Warm R2		0.210			0.223
Support R2					0.384
N		1949			1949

Notes: Coefficients for paths to Personal Religiosity not shown; Reference categories are White, H.S. Education, 2 biological parents, & Third Generation/Native

\* p<.05    \*\*p<.01    \*\*\*p<.001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 3.1 (cont'd): Relationship Quality with Mother - Social Resources and Religion Measures (SEM models for *church attending teens*)**

	Model 3			Model 4			
	Capital	Close	Warm	Support	Capital	Close	Warm
Congregational Social Support						0.092	0.164 **
Social Capital (Supportive Adults)		0.010 ***	0.016 ***			0.009 ***	0.014 ***
Personal Religiosity	1.386 ***	0.234 ***	0.178 ***	0.406 ***	1.387 ***	0.197 ***	0.115 ***
Similar Belief		0.142 ***	0.160 ***			0.138 ***	0.157 ***
Comfortable talking with Adults	0.663 ***	0.010 ***	0.082 ***	0.107 ***	0.663 ***	0.094 ***	0.065 ***
Female	-1.278 **	0.103 **	0.114 *	-0.192 ***	-1.278 **	0.134 **	0.143 **
Age	-0.020	0.117 ***	-0.145 ***	-0.044 **	-0.020	-0.045 **	-0.138 ***
Black	0.024	-0.049 **	-0.165 *	-0.061	0.024	0.161 **	-0.154 *
Hispanic	-1.049	0.156	0.011	-0.115	-1.049	0.143	0.028
Other Race	0.542	0.134	0.013	-0.039	0.541	0.079	0.021
Mom Works Full Time	-0.105	0.075	0.048	0.020	-0.105	0.005	0.044
South	-0.963 *	0.007	0.165 **	0.030	-0.963 *	-0.002	0.158 **
Parent Ed.: Less than High School	-0.883	0.002	-0.071	0.031	-0.884	-0.014	-0.077
Parent Ed.: Some beyond High School	-0.104	-0.010	0.074	-0.041	-0.103	-0.032	0.081
Parent Ed.: B.A./B.S. degree or more	-0.414	-0.036 *	0.116	-0.080	-0.413	-0.126 *	0.128
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.124	-0.133	-0.065	-0.003	-0.125	0.043	-0.065
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.306	0.043 **	-0.830 ***	-0.084	-0.309	-0.355 **	-0.817 ***
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.119	-0.365 *	-0.101	-0.114	0.120	0.272 *	-0.081
1 Parent: Biological	-0.552	0.263	0.048	-0.095	-0.552	0.026	0.063
1 Parent: Non-biological	1.228	0.018	-0.117	-0.001	1.226	0.007	-0.113
Parent Gender	-0.071	0.006 *	0.028	-0.010	-0.071	0.128 *	0.029
First Generation	0.175	0.127	-0.273	-0.356	0.176	-0.124	-0.215
Second Generation	-1.065	-0.158	-0.070	-0.085	-1.064	0.059	-0.057
		0.052					
Chi-Square			723.416 ***				857.691 ***
CFI			0.941				0.940
TLI			0.947				0.947
RMSEA			0.040				0.037
Close R2			0.237				0.241
Warm R2			0.225				0.234
Support R2							0.385
N			1949				1949

Notes: Coefficients for paths to Personal Religiosity not shown; Reference categories are White, High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

**Table 3.2: Relationship Quality with Father - Social Resources and Religion Measures (SEM models for *church attending teens* )**

	Model 1			Model 2	
	Close	Warm	Support	Close	Warm
<b>Congregational Social Support</b>				0.267 ***	0.177 **
<b>Social Capital (Supportive Adults)</b>					
<b>Personal Religiosity</b>	0.186 ***	0.155 ***	0.403 ***	0.079 *	0.087 *
<b>Similar Belief</b>	0.187 ***	0.206 ***		0.182 ***	0.207 ***
Comfortable talking with Adults	0.102 ***	0.074 ***	0.098 ***	0.076 ***	0.058 **
Female	-0.373 ***	0.303 ***	-0.165 ***	-0.329 ***	0.338 ***
Age	-0.080 ***	-0.153 ***	-0.049 **	-0.066 ***	-0.147 ***
Black	-0.070	-0.135	0.006	-0.072	-0.139 *
Hispanic	0.014	0.106	-0.105	0.042	0.126
Other Race	-0.250 *	-0.156	-0.060	-0.233 *	-0.148
Mom Works Full Time	-0.049	-0.095	-0.013	-0.046	-0.095
South	-0.014	0.054	0.011	-0.017	0.053
Parent Ed.: Less than High School	0.087	0.095	-0.145	0.125	0.123
Parent Ed.: Some beyond High School	0.088	0.194 **	-0.033	0.097	0.204 **
Parent Ed.: B.A./B.S. degree or more	0.095	0.215 **	-0.103	0.122	0.238 ***
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.504 ***	-0.683 ***	0.004	-0.504 ***	-0.698 ***
2 Parents: Biological Father	0.575 ***	0.316 **	-0.030	0.582 ***	0.327 *
2 Parents: Neither Biological	-0.248 *	-0.249 *	-0.125	-0.214	-0.231
1 Parent: Biological	0.205	0.361 **	0.150	0.164	0.342 *
1 Parent: Non-biological	0.079	-0.173	-0.016	0.083	-0.175
Parent Gender	-0.218 ***	-0.173 **	-0.004	-0.216 ***	-0.176 **
First Generation	-0.088	-0.158	-0.339	0.003	-0.102
Second Generation	0.092	0.021	-0.125	0.125	0.044
Chi-Square		578.514 ***			673.982 ***
CFI		0.957			0.957
TLI		0.966			0.965
RMSEA		0.042			0.038
Close R2		0.246			0.270
Warm R2		0.278			0.288
Support R2					0.402
N		1588			1588

Notes: Coefficients for paths to Personal Religiosity not shown; Reference categories are White, H.S. Education, 2 biological parents, & Third Generation/Native

\* p< .05    \*\*p< .01    \*\*\*p< .001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 3.2 (cont'd): Relationship Quality with Father - Social Resources and Religion Measures (SEM models for *church attending teens*)**

	Model 3				Model 4		
	Capital	Close	Warm	Support	Capital	Close	Warm
<b>Congregational Social Support</b>						0.254 ***	0.166 **
<b>Social Capital (Supportive Adults)</b>		0.009 ***	0.008 ***			0.007 ***	0.006 ***
<b>Personal Religiosity</b>	1.647 ***	0.172 ***	0.146 ***	0.411 ***	1.645 ***	0.071	0.081 *
<b>Similar Belief</b>		0.186 ***	0.210 ***			0.181 ***	0.207 ***
Comfortable talking with Adults	0.685 ***	0.096 ***	0.070 ***	0.100 ***	0.684 ***	0.072 ***	0.055 **
Female	-0.920 *	-0.364 ***	0.316 ***	-0.168 ***	-0.919 *	-0.323 ***	0.343 ***
Age	-0.075	-0.079 ***	-0.155 ***	-0.050 **	-0.075	-0.066 ***	-0.147 ***
Black	-0.392	-0.066	-0.135	0.007	-0.392	-0.069	-0.137 *
Hispanic	-1.097	0.024	0.116	-0.108	-1.095	0.049	0.133
Other Race	-0.974	-0.240 *	-0.151	-0.059	-0.975	-0.227 *	-0.143
Mom Works Full Time	0.688	-0.055	-0.102	-0.011	0.688	-0.051	-0.100
South	-1.190 *	-0.003	0.064	0.012	-1.190 *	-0.009	0.060
Parent Ed.: Less than High School	0.457	0.082	0.094	-0.145	0.456	0.120	0.119
Parent Ed.: Some beyond High School	0.158	0.087	0.197 **	-0.034	0.157	0.095	0.203 **
Parent Ed.: B.A./B.S. degree or more	-0.505	0.099	0.223 **	-0.104	-0.505	0.124	0.240 ***
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.053	-0.502 ***	-0.696 ***	0.003	-0.055	-0.501 ***	-0.698 ***
2 Parents: Biological Father	0.160	0.572 ***	0.320 **	-0.032	0.162	0.579 ***	0.326 *
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.341	-0.250 *	-0.256 *	-0.128	0.342	-0.216	-0.235 *
1 Parent: Biological	0.653	0.199	0.363 *	0.152	0.654	0.161	0.339 *
1 Parent: Non-biological	3.171 *	0.051	-0.202	-0.019	3.171 *	0.064	-0.194
Parent Gender	-0.181	-0.216 ***	-0.175	-0.005	-0.182	-0.214 ***	-0.175 **
First Generation	-0.005	-0.088	-0.161	-0.345	-0.004	0.000	-0.104
Second Generation	-0.869	0.099	0.028	-0.128	-0.866	0.130	0.048
Chi-Square			599.325 ***				705.322 ***
CFI			0.957				0.956
TLI			0.964				0.963
RMSEA			0.042				0.038
Close R2			0.250				0.273
Warm R2			0.281				0.290
Support R2							0.403
N			1588				1588

Notes: Coefficients for paths to Personal Religiosity not shown; Reference categories are White, High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\* p< .05    \*\*p< .01    \*\*\*p< .001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 3.3: Direct, Indirect and Total Effects of Religiosity on Relationship Quality with Mother**

	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect through Social Support	Indirect Effect through Social Capital	Total Effect	Percent of Total (Support)	Percent of Total (Capital)
<b>Model 1</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.247 ***			0.247		
Religiosity to Warm	0.200 ***			0.200		
<b>Model 2</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.203 ***	0.043 *		0.246	18%	
Religiosity to Warm	0.125 **	0.076 **		0.201	38%	
<b>Model 3</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.234 ***		0.013 ***	0.247		5%
Religiosity to Warm	0.178 ***		0.022 ***	0.200		11%
<b>Model 4</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.197 ***	0.037 +	0.012 ***	0.247	15%	5%
Religiosity to Warm	0.115 **	0.067 ***	0.019 ***	0.201	33%	10%

\*  $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .01$     \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

**Table 3.4: Direct, Indirect and Total Effects of Religiosity on Relationship Quality with Father**

	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect through Social Support	Indirect Effect through Social Capital	Total Effect	Percent of Total (Support)	Percent of Total (Capital)
<b>Model 1</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.186 ***			0.186		
Religiosity to Warm	0.155 ***			0.155		
<b>Model 2</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.079 *	0.108 ***		0.187	58%	
Religiosity to Warm	0.087 *	0.071 **		0.158	45%	
<b>Model 3</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.172 ***		0.015 ***	0.187		8%
Religiosity to Warm	0.146 ***		0.013 ***	0.159		8%
<b>Model 4</b>						
Religiosity to Close	0.071	0.105 ***	0.011 ***	0.116	91%	9%
Religiosity to Warm	0.081 *	0.068 **	0.010 ***	0.159	43%	6%

\* p< .05    \*\*p< .01    \*\*\*p< .001 (two-tailed tests)



Figure 3.1: General Structural Model

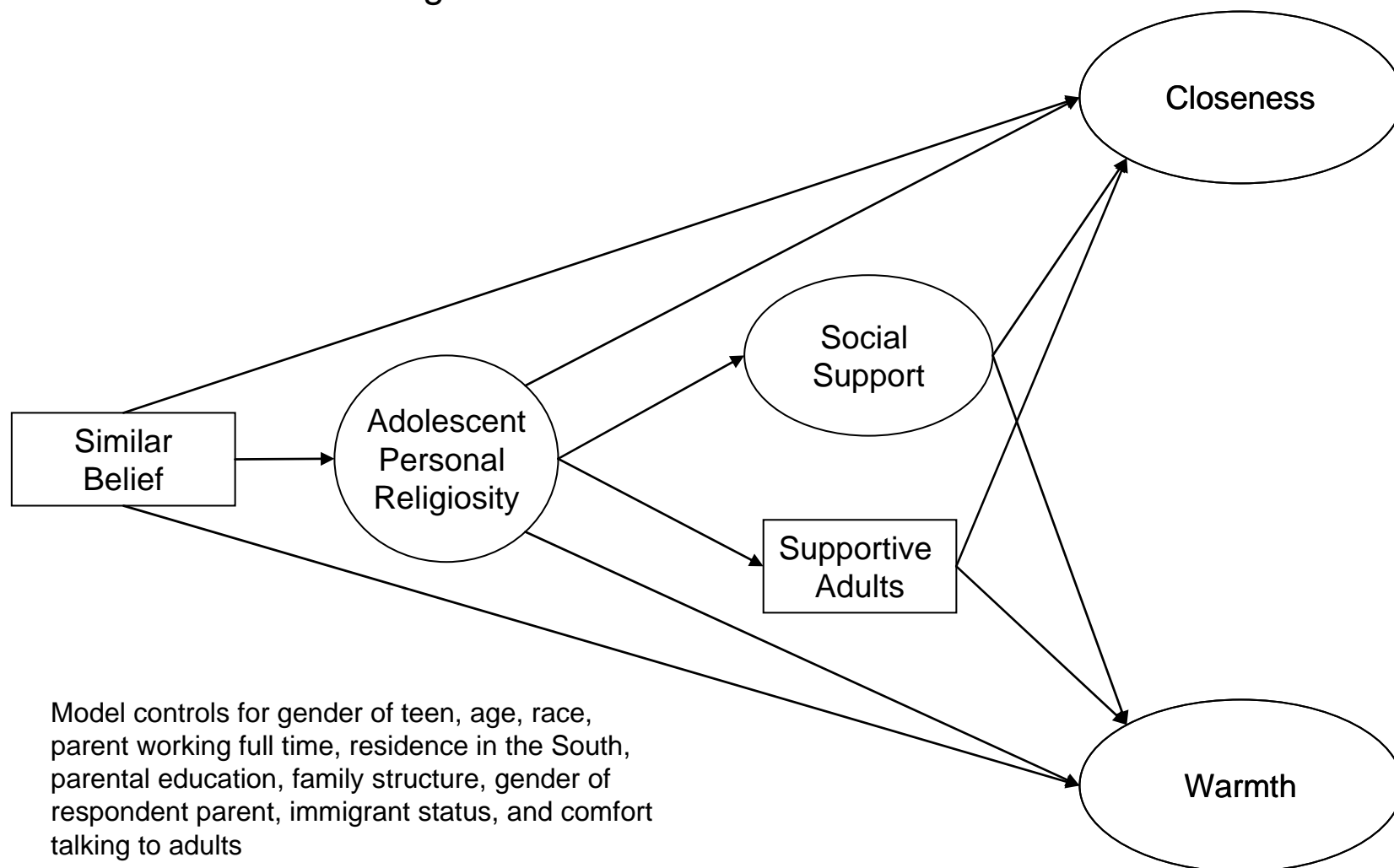


Figure 3.2: Relationship Quality with Mother – Model 1

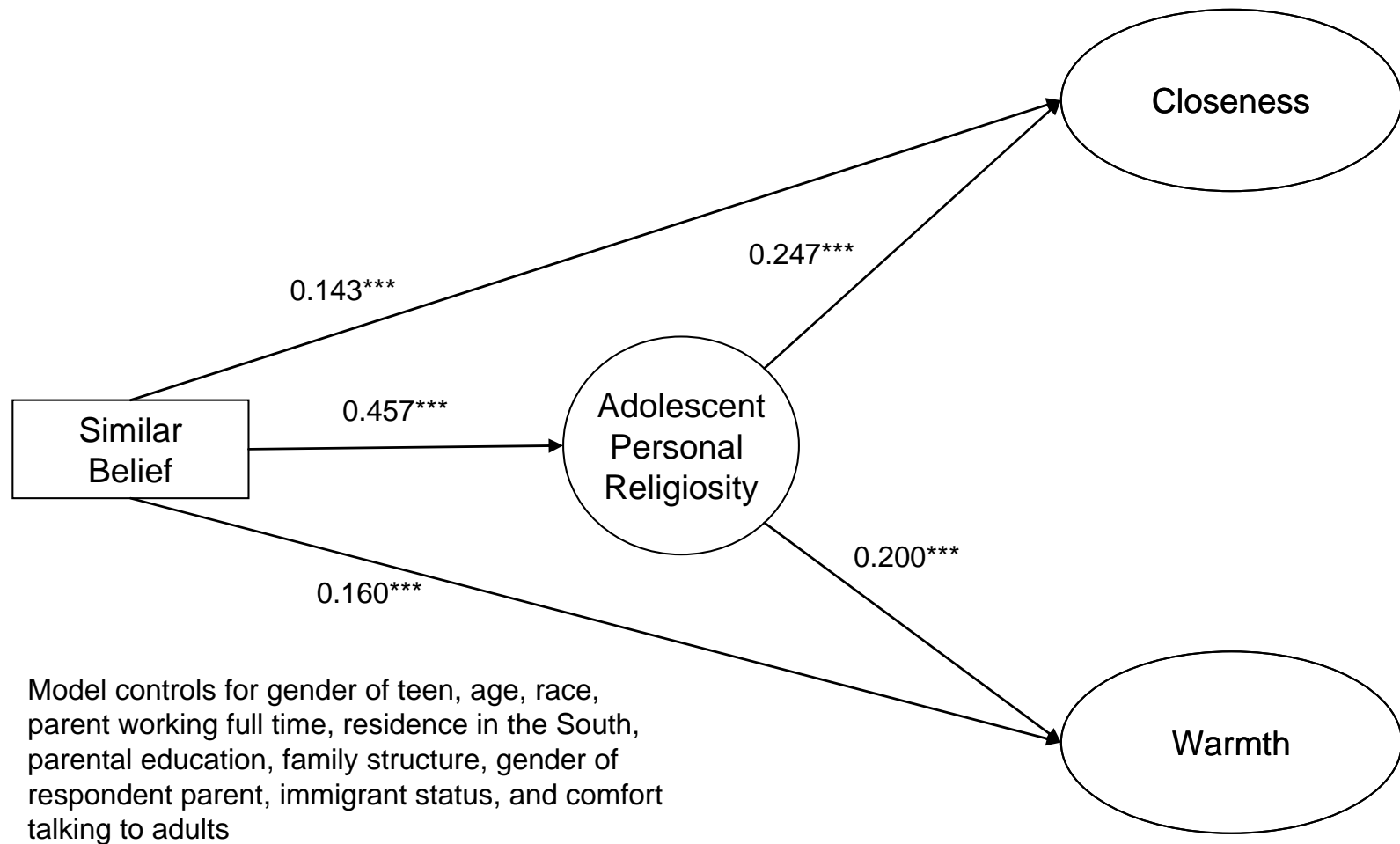


Figure 3.3: Relationship Quality with Father – Model 1

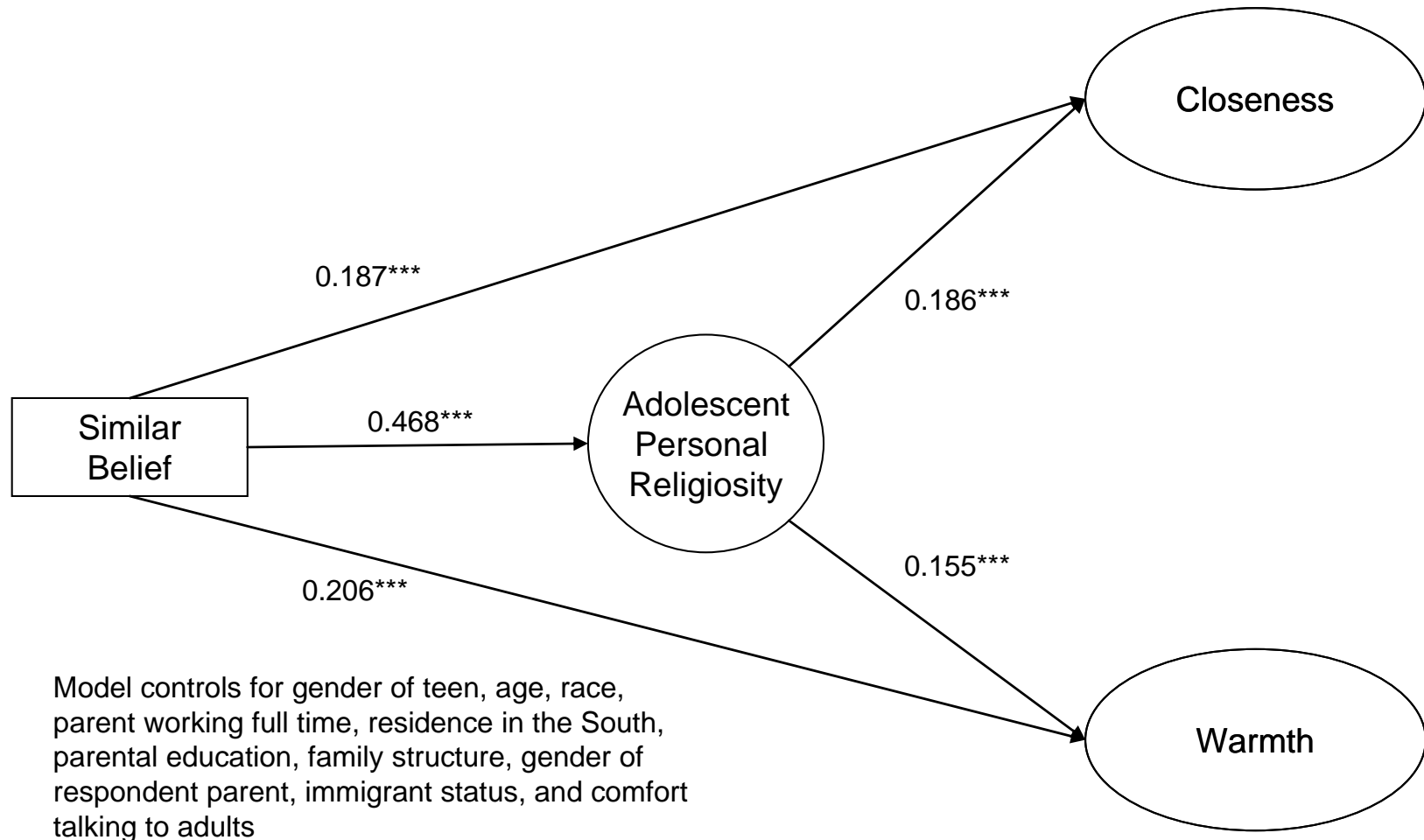


Figure 3.4: Relationship Quality with Mother – Model 2

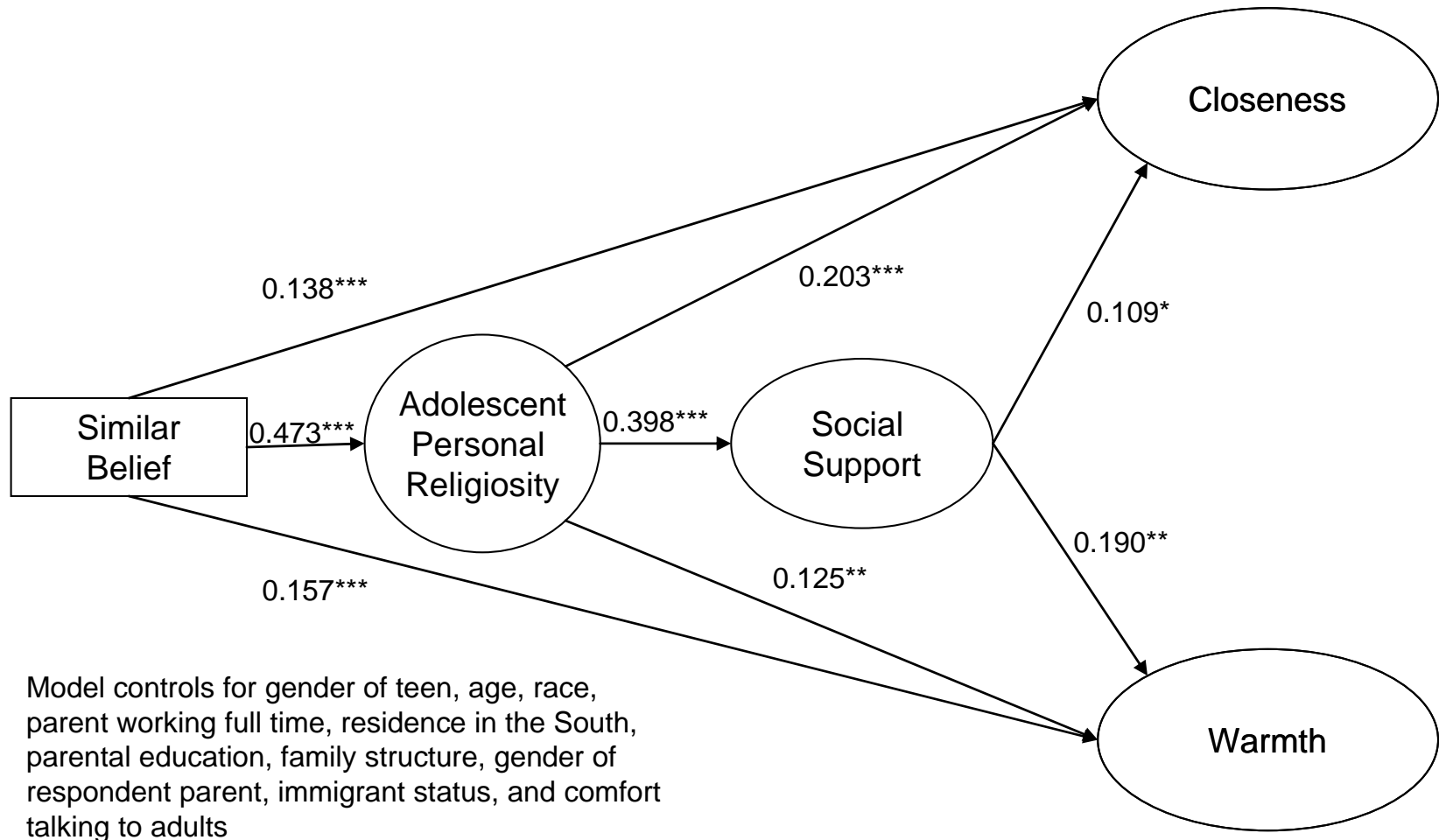


Figure 3.5: Relationship Quality with Father – Model 2

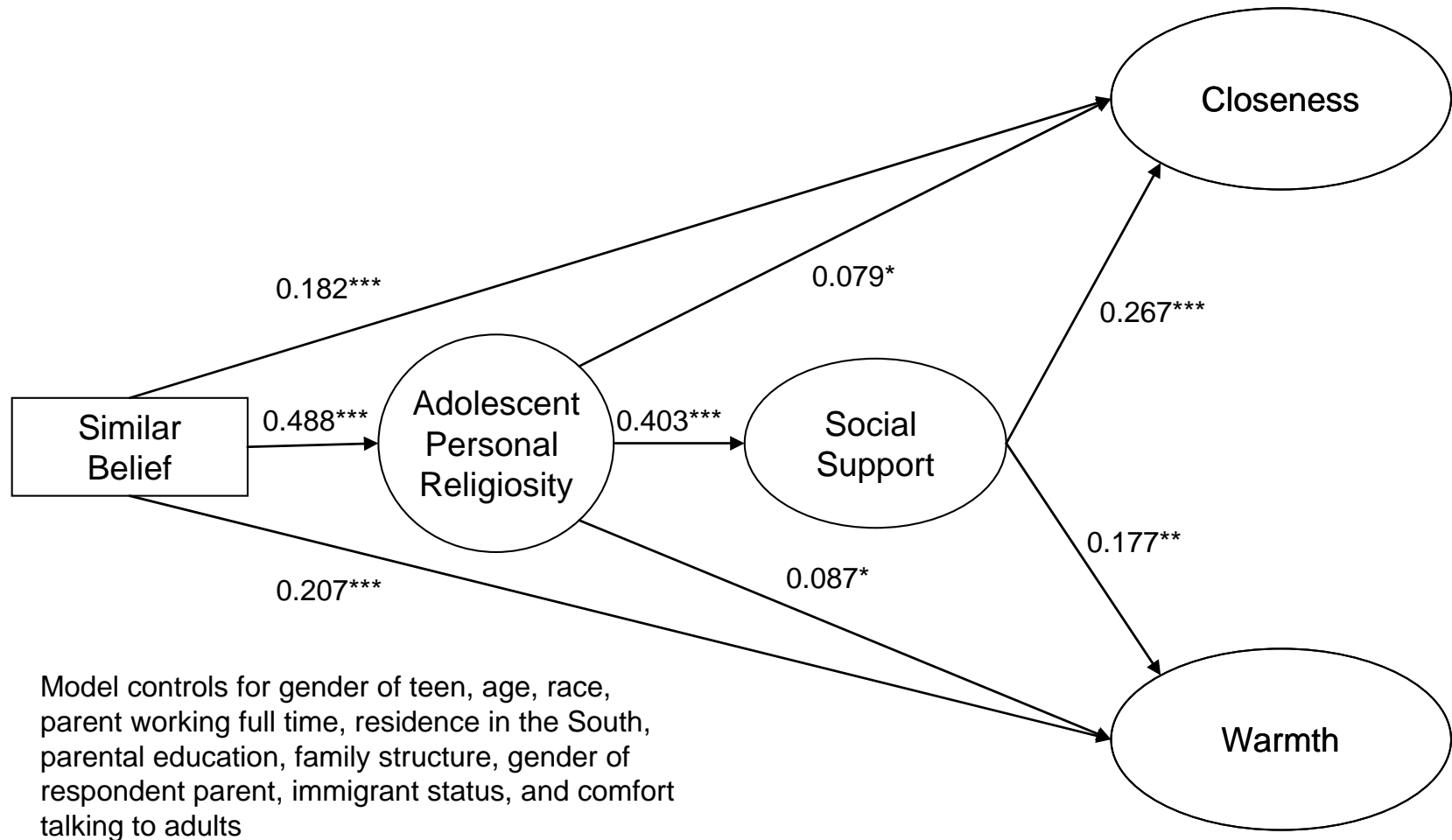


Figure 3.6: Relationship Quality with Mother – Model 3

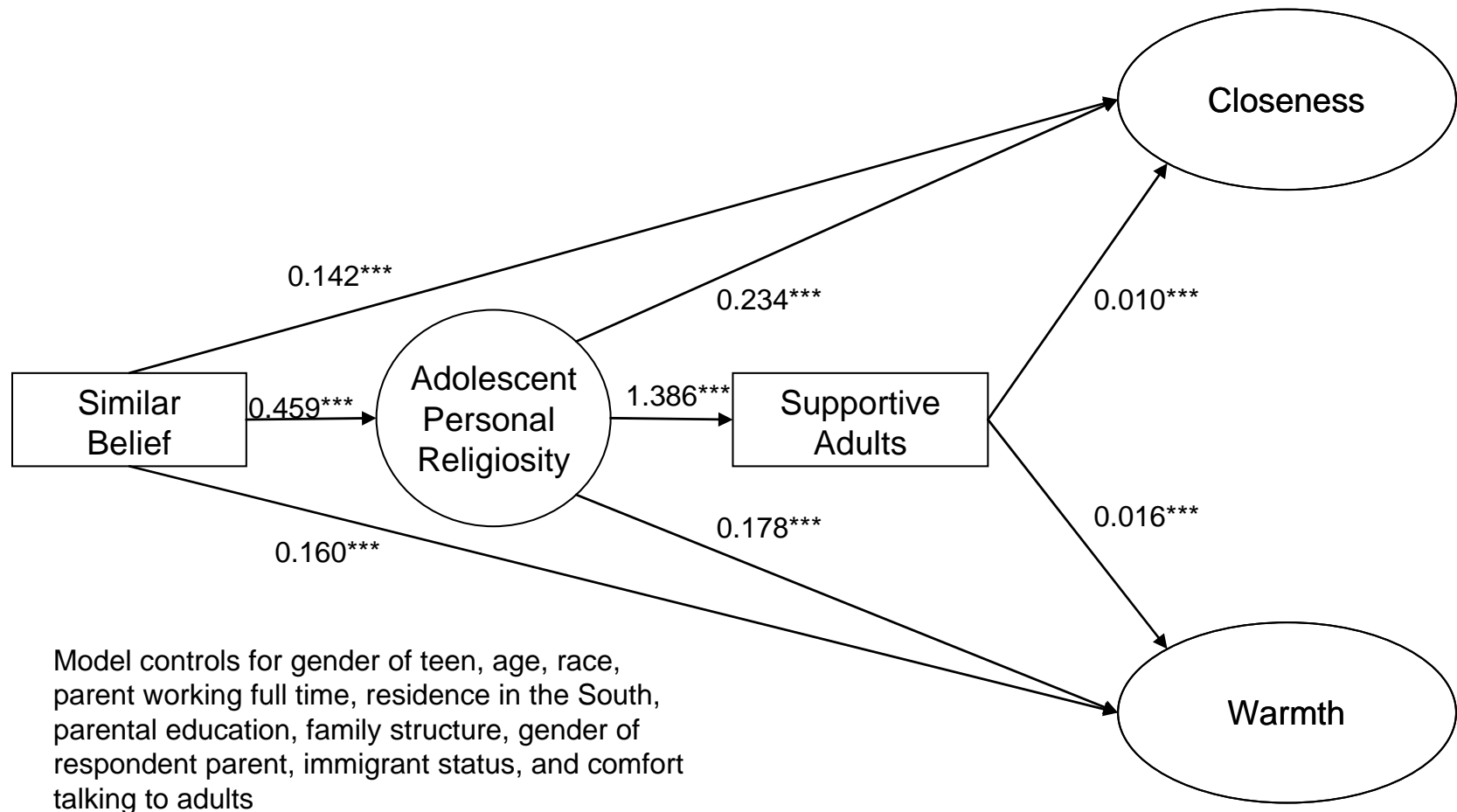


Figure 3.7: Relationship Quality with Father – Model 3

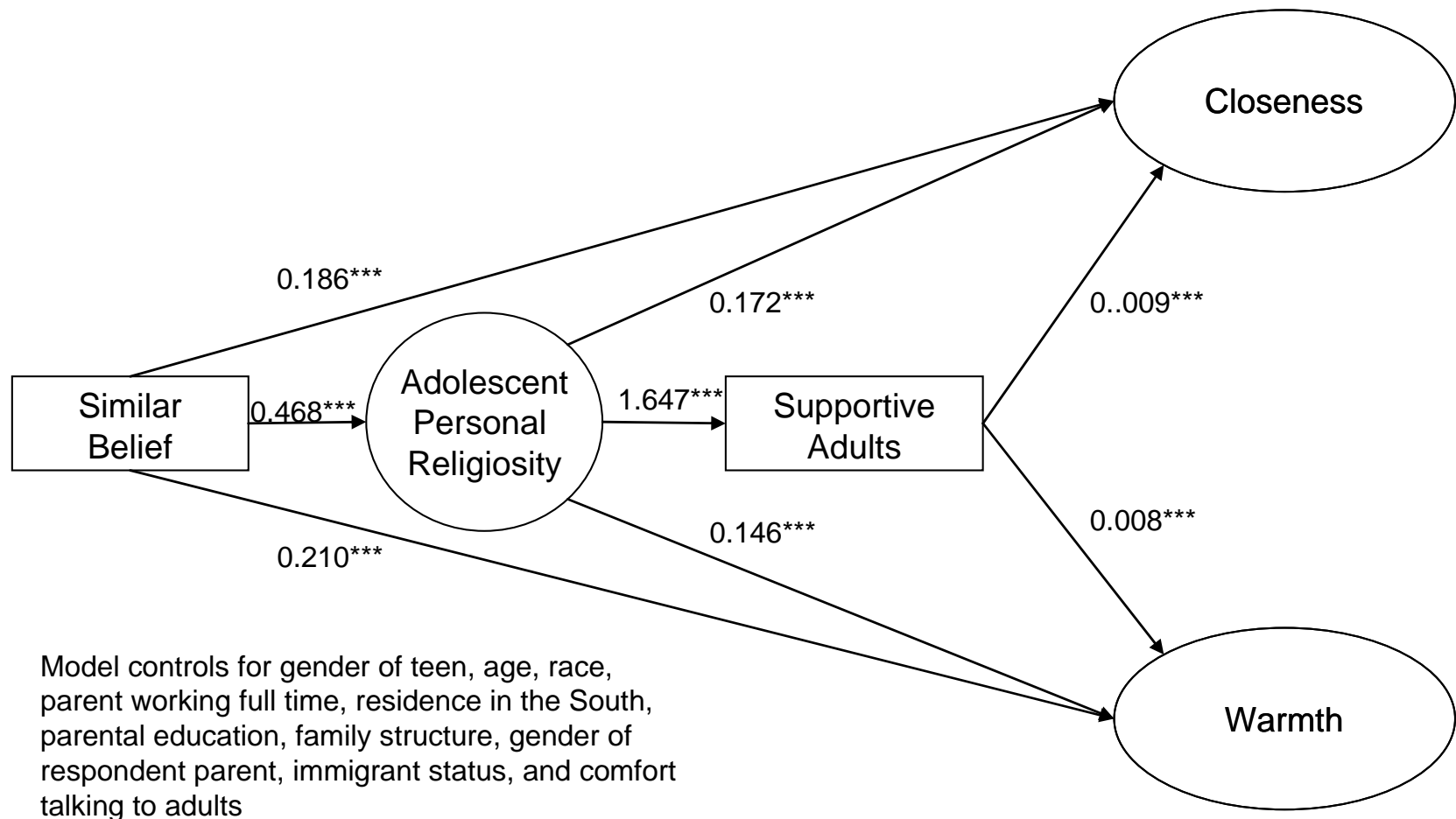


Figure 3.8: Relationship Quality with Mother – Model 4

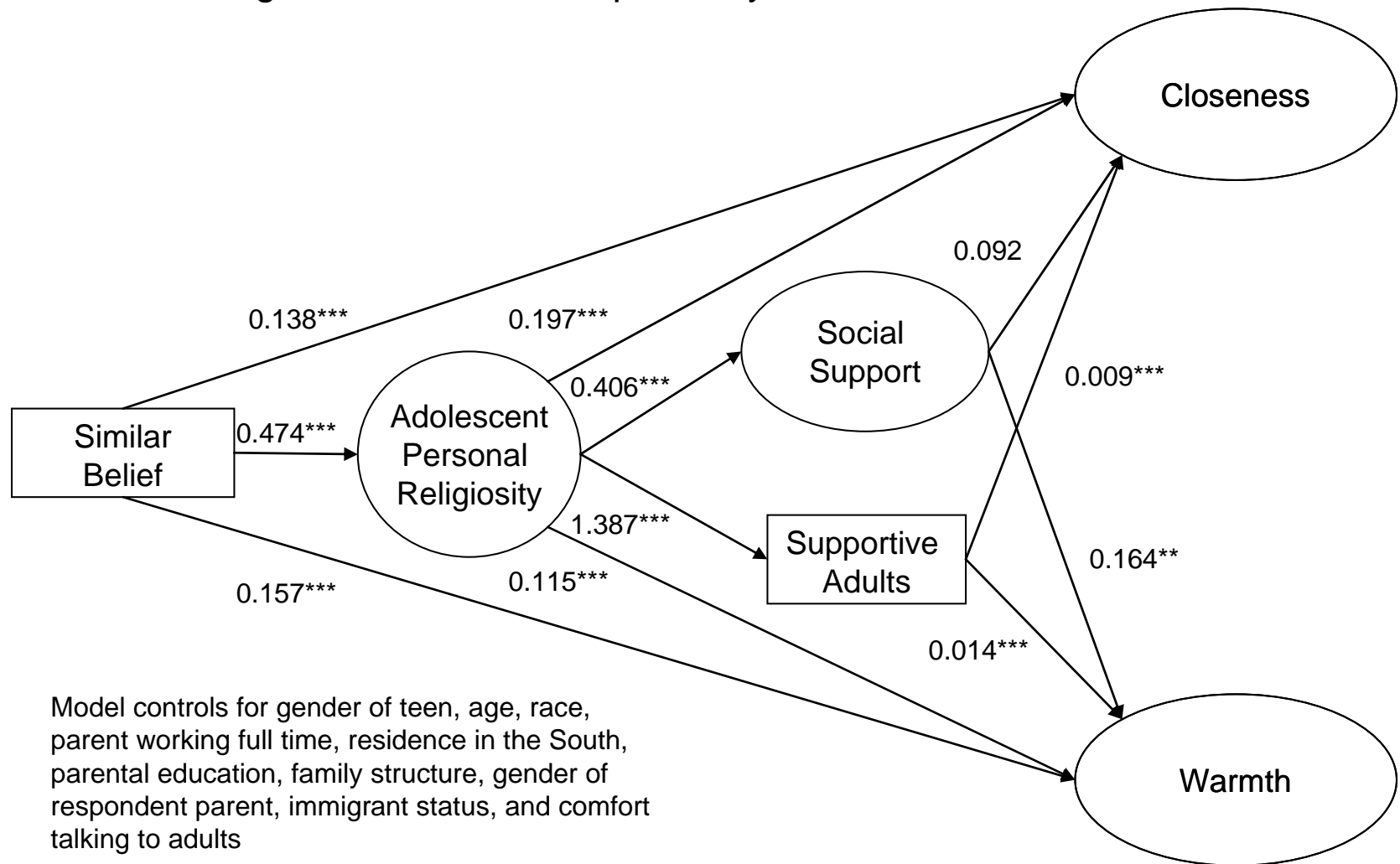
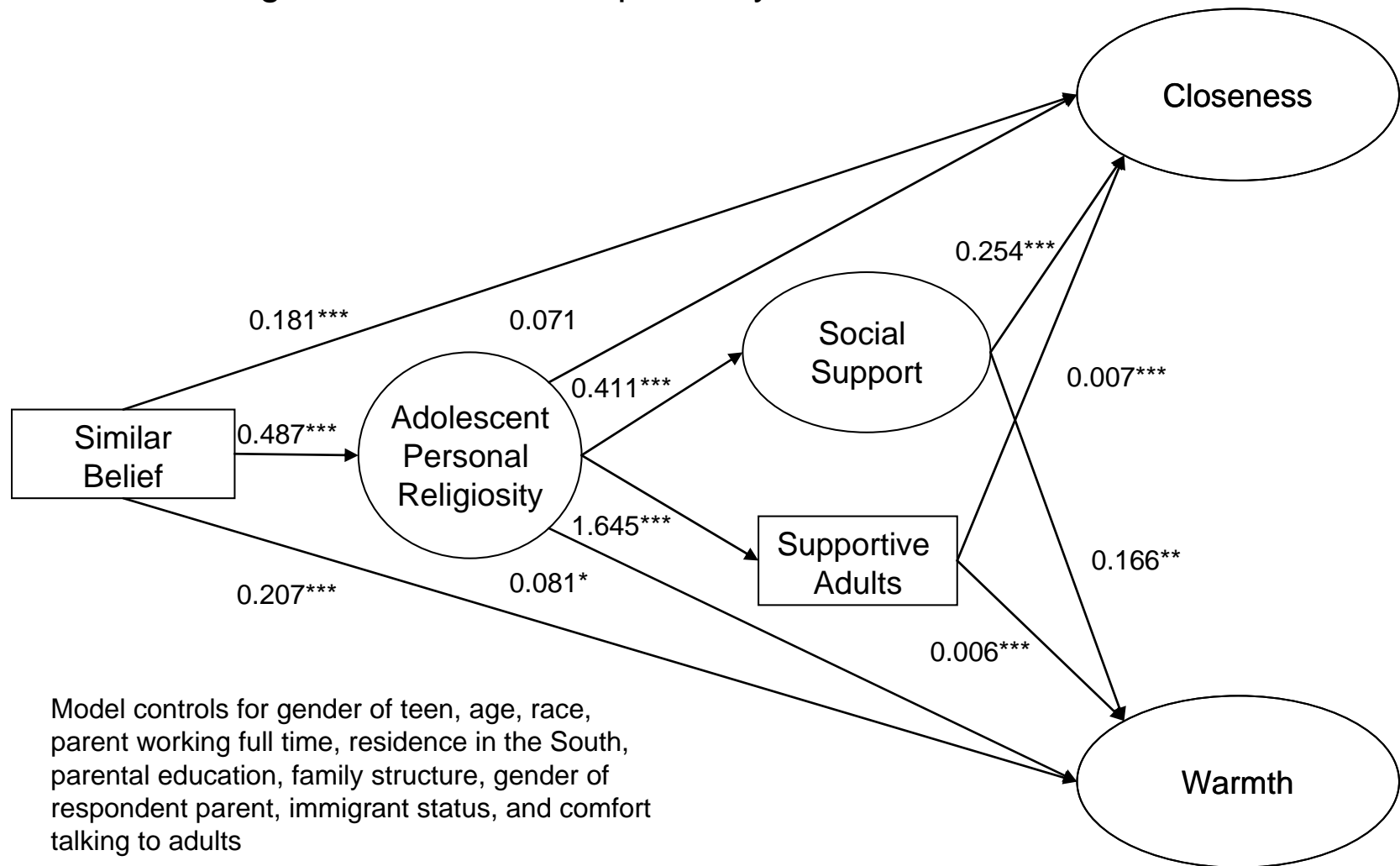




Figure 3.9: Relationship Quality with Father – Model 4



## CHAPTER IV

### The Differential Effects of Religion across Black and White Adolescent-Parent Relationships

In Chapters Two and Three I found the religious lives of adolescents to be significantly related to the quality of relationships adolescents report having with their parents. Specifically, I examined multiple dimensions of religiosity in an attempt to further specify the mechanisms by which religion operates within family relationships. In Chapter Two, I established a general model of religion and relationships quality between parents and adolescents. The model includes multiple dimensions of the religious lives of adolescents: attendance at religious services, the personal religious commitments of teenagers, and the extent of parent-adolescent religious solidarity. The general structure of the model can be seen in Figure 4.1. Religious solidarity and personal religiosity were found to be statistically significant and positively related to adolescents' reports of closeness with and warmth from their parents. With these two facets of their religious lives accounted for, however, the path from frequency of religious service attendance to parent-adolescent relationship quality was negative or not statistically significant. The model illustrates the ways in which different dimensions of religion operate in the relationships between adolescents and their parents.

Having established this general model in the previous chapters, this chapter seeks to examine any potential race differences in how religion and parent-child relationship quality are related. Specifically, I address the question of whether adolescent religious service

attendance, personal religiosity and parent-child religious solidarity operate similarly or differently for white and black adolescents with regard to parent-child relationship quality. Using multi-group structural equation modeling, I compare the model as applied to white and black adolescents to determine whether there are differential effects of religion in their relationships with their parents.

### *The Black Church*<sup>1</sup>

It is well documented that religion and religious institutions play an important role in the black community (Ellison 1993; Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Frazier 1974; Glenn and Gotard 1977; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Taylor, Chatters, and Levin 2004). Much of the literature addressing the role of the Black church notes the unique social context that gave rise to this institution and the enduring legacy of religion among black Americans today. Many scholars point out that one important feature of the Black church is the multidimensional nature of this institution. According to Lincoln and Mayima (1990), black churches were one of the few stable institutions in the black community following the slavery era. As such, the church as a social institution played a wide range of roles within the community. According to DuBois (1907, p. 54), the building of black churches was the “first form of economic cooperation” among black people. In the history of the Black church, there has been only partial differentiation from secular society. The spheres of religion, family, politics and economy are not clearly demarcated, but rather integrated and interwoven. Given this interaction of spheres, the church has come to play a much more central role in black culture than in communities where religion is a separate sphere, cut off from other areas of life (Lincoln and

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<sup>1</sup> I follow the example of others scholars in using the term “the Black Church” to refer to the pluralism of black Christian churches in the United States, particularly the major historic black denominations. See Lincoln and Mayima (1990) for a detailed discussion of the term “the Black church.”

Mamiya 1990). The Black church has served as a link to community resources, a base for political mobilization, and a provider of instrumental, psychological and social support (McRae, Thompson, and Cooper 1999; Moore 2003; Taylor et al. 2004).

The Black church also has a history of providing significant formal and informal social support, acting as an “extended-family” for members. Coreligionists use kinship terms (e.g. “brother”, “sister”) to refer to one another, reflecting the family-like quality of the relationships between members (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). Church members serve as important sources of social support and instrumental assistance (Chatters et al. 2002; Taylor, Lincoln, and Chatters 2005). In focus groups with black church members, the language of family was often used to describe the assistance received from fellow churchgoers (Taylor et al. 2004). According to some scholars, black churches are more actively engaged in providing for the well-being of church members than are predominantly white churches (Baer and Singer 1992; Ferraro and Koch 1994).

The prominent role of the church in black culture and community life has also given rise to the “semi-involuntary institution” thesis. According to this thesis, in the historical absence of secular opportunities for blacks to achieve status and social advancement, the Black church filled this role as a central institution providing social structure for black communities (Hunt and Hunt 2000). The “symbolic centrality and historic multifunctionality” of the Black church led to strong normative expectations about religious participation among blacks (Ellison and Sherkat 1999, p. 794). In these communities, social status and respectability are often dependent on maintaining at least some ties to the religious community. In this context, higher levels of church attendance and religious participation may be driven by

social pressure and expectations as well as individual beliefs and preferences (Sherkat and Cunningham 1998).

### *Religion and Life Outcomes among Black Americans*

Given the historical centrality of the Black church and its long-standing involvement in multiple facets of the lives of blacks, it is not surprising that scholars have found religion to be related to a wide range of life outcomes among black Americans. Religion and religious involvement have been found to be positively related to the physical health as well as mental health of blacks (Holt, Lewellyn, and Rathweg 2005; Jang and Johnson 2004; Marks et al. 2005; Olphen et al. 2003). As was discussed in Chapter Three, the link between religion and health has been attributed in part to the fact that religious individuals often experience higher amounts of social support. Linda Chatters, Robert Taylor and colleagues have written about the Black church as a significant source of social support for members (Chatters et al. 2002; Taylor and Chatters 1988). Olphen also found that social support mediates a positive link between religion and physical and mental health among black women (2003). Other studies have linked higher levels of religiosity among blacks to increased self-esteem, reduced life stress and the use of less coercive parenting strategies (Ellison 1993; Wiley, Warren, and Montanelli 2002).

Research on black adolescents has uncovered similar positive life outcomes in connection with personal religiosity. Religion has been found to be a protective factor for black girls against the negative outcomes of stress (Grant et al. 2000). Among black boys religion employed as a form of coping leads to more positive self image and sense of self (Spencer,

Fegley, and Harpalani 2003). The religiosity of black teenagers is also positively related to better academic outcomes (Brody, Stoneman, and Flor 1996) and lower risk of substance use.

Of particular interest to this chapter are the research findings relating religion to interpersonal relationships. Brody and colleagues (Brody et al. 1996; Brody et al. 1994b) found religion to be a positive predictor of cohesive relationships within black families. In a more recent work, Mattis and Jagers (2001) present a theoretical framework for understanding the role of religion and spirituality in the study of relationships among blacks. They suggest that religion and spirituality contribute to the development and maintenance of a wide range of relationships across multiple domains, including individual, family, community and society. Another study by Mattis et al. (2001) finds subjective spirituality to be positively related to levels of support that black males perceive from their same-sex friends.

### *Race Differences in Religiosity*

While there is general consensus that religion and religious institutions hold a unique place in black communities and that religiosity is linked to a variety of positive outcomes among blacks, empirical work comparing religiosity patterns of blacks to other racial groups is limited. The work that has been done consistently finds that blacks score higher on a number of religious measures than do whites, including frequency of prayer, church attendance and scripture reading (Musick, Wilson, and Bynum 2000; Taylor 1993). Taylor and colleagues (1996) offer a critique of this research, noting that much of it fails to use multivariate analysis to account for important intervening variables in the relationship between race and religiosity. They address this concern by conducting analyses across seven national datasets.

The multivariate analyses include a number of demographic variables (e.g. age, gender, education, income and region) and support previous findings of consistent racial differences in religious involvement. In the samples examined, blacks were more likely than whites to demonstrate higher levels of both public and private religiosity.

The discrepancy between the religiosity of blacks and whites holds for adolescents as well as adults. In their 1989 review of the literature on adolescents and religion, Benson, Donahue and Erickson (1989) noted that religious differences by race and ethnicity had not received frequent research attention. However, the research to this point in time did suggest differences between black and white adolescent religiosity. Specifically, in the studies they reviewed black adolescents attached more importance to religion and church and scored higher on measures of intrinsic religion than did whites. However, white teenagers were found to be more likely to report weekly attendance at religious services. Since this review, more recent research has continued to find higher levels of both religious importance and religious practice among black adolescents as compared to white adolescents (Donahue and Benson 1995; Wallace et al. 2003b).

### *Differential Effects of Religion*

Beyond the comparison of blacks' and whites' levels of religiosity is the question of the role of religion in the lives of blacks and how this compares to the way that religion operates among whites. Given the unique history of the church in black communities, some have suggested that religion is not only more important for blacks, but that the mechanisms by which it influences people's lives might be different among blacks than among whites (Musick et al. 2000; Taylor 1993) (Ferraro and Koch 1994). A handful of studies have

addressed the question of differential effects of religion among whites and blacks. One group of studies finds different dimensions of religion at work across racial groups in the measurement of the impact of religion on physical and mental health outcomes (Drevenstedt 1998; Ferraro and Koch 1994; Krause 2002; Krause 2003; Musick 1996). In particular, Krause (2002; 2003) found that the health benefits of religion are greater for blacks than whites, while Ferraro and Koch (1994) found that religious practice has a salutary effect on health among blacks, but not among whites.

Additional work by Krause (2004) further illuminates racial differences in the effects of religion, identifying two facets of religion that he calls common and unique. Common facets are those elements of religion available to any racial group, while unique facets are available only to people of a specific racial group. In the case of blacks, an example of a unique facet of religion would be the belief that religion is a source of support in the face of racial discrimination or oppression. In an analysis of older black Americans, he finds that both common facets of religion and unique facets of religion make significant contributions to the life satisfaction of the respondents. The identification of a unique dimension of religion operating among blacks supports the suggestion that the mechanisms of religious influence may vary across racial groups.

A number of studies have also examined racial differences in the role of religion as a protective factor against alcohol use among adults and adolescents. One study finds a stronger protective effect for black adolescents as compared to white adolescents (Barnes, Farrell, and Banerjee 1994). However, several other studies have concluded that the results are more complex, with different dimensions of religion operating differently for blacks and white. Ford (2002) finds that the doctrinal position of the church with regard to alcohol is a



significant factor predicting alcohol use among white adults. However, among black adults, religious attendance regardless of specific doctrine has a protective effect against alcohol use. Research by Brown (2001) finds similar results for adolescents. For white teenagers, affiliation with a fundamentalist religious group is associated with reduced alcohol use, while for black teenagers, levels of attendance and prayer are associated with lower rates of alcohol use. These studies indicate that there are different mechanisms operating across racial groups in the relationship between religion and alcohol use. Specifically, the scholars suggest that social support from and integration into a religious community operate to reduce alcohol use among blacks, whereas the patterns of alcohol use among whites is more influenced by specific doctrinal opposition to alcohol use. Similarly, research by Wallace (2003a) suggests that the link between religion and substance use operates at the community level for black adolescents and at the individual level for white adolescents. In other words, the protective effect for black teenagers stems largely from affiliation with a religious community, and the protective effect for white teenagers is more directly linked to individual religiosity.

Another area of research on differential religious effects across racial groups is the link between religiosity and adolescent sexual behavior. The racial differences in the impact of religion on sexual behavior are not entirely clear-cut. The most consistent findings have been for white adolescent females. Studies have found religion measures to be linked to delayed sexual activity among this group of teenagers (Bearman and Bruckner 2001; Benson et al. 1989). In their review of multiple studies, however, Rostosky et al. (2004) report that while some studies find stronger protective effects of religion among white adolescent females, studies using different measures of religion report similar effects of religion on the sexual debut of white and black girls. These mixed results emphasize the need to further

explore various dimensions of religiosity and the different mechanisms through which religion might operate in the lives of white and black adolescents.

### *Parent-Child Relationships*

Most of the literature about the relationships between black adolescents and their parents addresses parenting styles and practices. Bluestone (1999) argues that early comparisons between black and white parenting styles often confounded race with socioeconomic status. The focus on low-income black families furthered the image of black parents as more parent-oriented and characterized by authoritarian parenting practices as compared to white families. In contrast to narrow stereotypes about black parenting practices, scholars have documented a range of different parenting techniques used by black parents (Bluestone and Tamis-LeMonda 1999; Kelley, Power, and Wimbush 1992). In her detailed ethnographic study of parenting practices, Lareau (2003) attempts to clarify the distinction between race and socioeconomic status as they relate to parenting styles. She concludes that social class that is the stronger predictor of parenting practices. According to her research, the differences between black and white families are negligible in comparison to the differences between poor, working- and middle-class families. In a study of adolescent alcohol use, Barnes (1994) found that the parenting characteristics correlated with alcohol use were similar for both black and white teenagers. Radziszewska (1996) also found that the impact of parenting style on smoking, depression and academic outcomes was generally similar across race.

Although most of the literature focuses on parenting styles, a recent book about black families in America (Johnson and Staples 2005) addresses the issue of the quality of relationships between parents and children. The authors claim that black parents have closer

relationships with their children than do white parents. One reason they give for this difference is that black mothers and fathers often share both the expressive and provider roles that are more typically gender-specific among white parents. The ability of mothers and fathers to play both roles increases the emotional warmth of parent-child relationships, particularly relationships between black fathers with their children. They also suggest that black parents often must make sacrifices for their children in order to help them succeed as minorities in a hostile social environment, and these sacrifices draw them into closer relationships with their children. A recent ethnographic study of middle-class black families notes that while children do not always immediately appreciate the sacrifices of their parents, they do come to appreciate them over time and recognize the importance of their parents' role in their life (Pattillo-McCoy 1999). While these authors suggest plausible reasons why black teenagers might be closer to their parents than white teenagers, their research is based on analyses of black families, and does not involve direct empirical comparisons of white and black adolescent family relationships.

### *Religion and Parent-Child Relationship Quality*

Scholars have noted that the institutions of church and family have a cooperative relationship in the black community, suggesting that the intersection of religion and family life is particularly salient for this population. As it does in so many other arenas, the Black church takes an active role in the family lives of members, through teachings, formal programs and informal support of families and family relationships (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Marks et al. 2005; Taylor et al. 2004). The Black church provides guidance and support for family issues, including parenting, and places a substantial emphasis on children

(Johnson and Staples 2005). Given these pro-family orientations and the close relationship between religion and family life, Brody et al. (1994a) suggest that religious participation is likely to have a positive influence on family interactions. In their studies of rural black families, they find that parental religiosity is both directly and indirectly related to more cohesive family relationships and better quality relationships between parents and adolescents (Brody et al. 1996; Brody et al. 1994b). In another study of black single-parent families, Brody and Flor (1998) find that maternal religiosity is positively related to better quality relationship between mothers and their children.

The studies by Brody and colleagues are limited to parent-child relationships within black families. The differential effects of religion across racial groups have not been thoroughly explored in the area of family relationships. Specifically, we know very little about how the relationship quality between adolescents and their parents is influenced by religion across black and white adolescents.

### *Theoretical Expectations*

Chapter Two outlines two theoretical mechanisms through which religion may contribute to the quality of relationships between parents and teenagers: pro-family moral beliefs and religious solidarity. Pro-family beliefs are a part of almost every religious tradition.

Individuals who participate in religious activities may be exposed to directives about family relationships through sermons, religious teachings, religious media, statements by clergy, and biblical texts. Adolescents who are more active in and committed to their religious tradition are also more likely to accept and put into practice religious teachings that stress the importance of positive family relationships. Religious solidarity is another aspect of religion

that is related to increased relationship quality between parents and adolescents. Shared religious beliefs could serve as a common bond between parent and teenager, providing a sense that they share their core values and view of the world. These shared values and viewpoints may contribute to a better understanding of one another and ability to relate to one another. In addition, if parent and adolescent subscribe to the same religious beliefs, they are more likely to approach their relationship with similar expectations and attitudes, making it easier to get along.

Given what we know about religious differences between whites and blacks, how might we expect these mechanisms to play out between the two groups? In light of the evidence that religion has been a central institution within black communities in the United States and that blacks tend to be more highly religious than their white counterparts, I expect that the association between religion and parent-child relationship quality may be stronger for black adolescents than for whites. If religion influences family relationships through the inculcation of pro-family beliefs, then I would expect that stronger pro-family messages will result in a stronger association with relationship quality. As was discussed above, scholars claim that religion occupies a unique role in the lives of black people, and many note the particular emphasis on family and family relationships within black religious traditions. If black religious traditions offer a unique religious context with an historical emphasis on children and family relationship as scholars claim, then black teenagers with a high degree of commitment to their faith within this religious context may experience greater exposure and subsequent commitment to the teachings of the church with regard to family relationships than white teenagers with a similar level of religious commitment.

In addition, if there is a heightened emphasis on religion among blacks and if religion is a “semi-involuntary institution,” then we might also expect religious solidarity to be more important for the parent-child relationships of black adolescents as compared to white adolescents. In a context of high expectations about religion, the lack of congruent religious beliefs between parents and teenagers might create more strain in a relationship than in a context with lower religious expectations. I hypothesize, therefore, that any positive relationships between religion and parent-child relationship will be stronger for blacks than for whites.

### *Data and Methods*

#### Data Source

This study uses data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The quantitative component of this data is the National Survey of Youth and Religion (NSYR). This is a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 U.S. English and Spanish speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, and of one of their parents. The NSYR also includes 80 oversampled Jewish households, bringing the total number of completed NSYR cases to 3,370. The NSYR was conducted from July, 2002 to April, 2003 by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill using a random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey method, employing a sample of randomly generated telephone numbers representative of all household telephones in the 50 United States. The national survey sample was arranged in replicates based on the proportion of working household telephone exchanges nationwide. This RDD method ensures equal representation of listed, unlisted, and not-yet-listed household telephone numbers. Eligible households included at

least one teenager between the ages of 13-17 living in the household for at least six months of the year. In order to randomize responses within households, and so to help attain representativeness of age and gender, interviewers asked to conduct the survey with the teenager in the household who had the most recent birthday. The NSYR was conducted with members of both English and Spanish speaking households. Participants were offered a financial incentive to participate. All randomly generated telephone numbers were dialed a minimum of 20 times over a minimum of five months per number, spread out over varying hours during week days, week nights, and weekends. The calling design included at least two telephone-based attempts to convert refusals. Households refusing to cooperate with the survey but established by initial screening to include children ages 13 to 17 in residence and with telephone numbers able to be matched to mailing addresses were also sent by mail information about the survey, contact information for researchers, and a request to cooperate and complete the survey; those records were then called back again for possible refusal conversions. Ninety-six percent of parent complete households also achieved teenager completes. Diagnostic analyses comparing NSYR data with 2002 U.S. Census data on comparable households and with comparable adolescent surveys---such as Monitoring the Future, the National Household Education Survey, and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health---confirm that the NSYR provides a nationally representative sample without identifiable sampling and nonresponse biases of U.S. teenagers ages 13-17 and their parents living in households (for details, see Smith and Denton 2003). For descriptive purposes, a weight was created to adjust for number of teenagers in household, number of household telephone numbers, census region of residence, and household income. This analysis is limited to the teenage respondents who identify themselves as Black, African

American, White or Caucasian. The 80 Jewish oversample cases are omitted from this analysis.

#### Limitations of cross-sectional data

One important issue that must be recognized with this analysis is that it employs cross-sectional data. Cross-sectional data inherently limits causal explanations about the relationships found in the analyses. According to Regnerus and Smith (2005), scholars are cautious about attributing causation to observed associations, and this is a particular concern with regards to religion. Claims that religion influences other aspects of social life have drawn skepticism<sup>2</sup> and the associations between religion and outcomes have often been attributed instead to selection effects. In my analysis, there is the possibility that any relationship between religion and the quality of parent-child relationships is the result of some underlying, unmeasured variable that influences both an individual's propensity to be religious and their ability to maintain quality family relationships. There is also the possibility of endogeneity as a result of a reciprocal relationship between religion and relationship quality. These are issues of concern to not only my specific analysis, but to the larger first-wave project of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) of which my research is a part.

In an attempt to address this issue, Regnerus and Smith (2005) have conducted analysis using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Through analysis of longitudinal data, they conclude that while effects of religion variables do appear to be endogenous, the endogeneity does not eliminate independent religious effects. Instead, the

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<sup>2</sup> Stark (2000) suggests that generations of social scientists "have embraced a strange doctrine," namely that they "prefer to trace all religious phenomena to *material* causes and are quick to deny the possibility that religion is the real cause of anything."



effects of endogeneity on any given model of religious influence are limited and do not warrant entirely dismissing the religious effects as “selection effects.” Their findings do not eliminate the need to be cautious in the interpretation of associations found in cross-sectional data. It does, however, suggest that there is value to continuing to examine questions about religious influence, even when the best available data are cross-sectional.

While acknowledging the limitations of cross-sectional data, I also rely on theoretical logic to inform my understanding of the direction of causation among the variables in my analysis. Theoretical arguments suggest that while there may be some reciprocity between religion and relationship quality, there are also strong reasons to believe that religion has a causal influence on relationship quality that would not be explained away by reverse causation or selection effects. One goal of my analysis, then, is to construct models that are consistent with theoretical expectations. The extent to which the models presented here correctly model that which we expect based on these theoretical understandings will inform our ability to make qualified and cautious causal inferences.

A second goal of my analysis is to lay the groundwork for future analyses. The cross-sectional data used here are part of a larger, longitudinal project. The data from second and third waves of this project are not yet available for analysis. However, in the future, I will be able to use these longitudinal data to further explore the relationship between religion and relationship quality and make stronger claims about endogeneity, reciprocity, and causal direction.

## Analysis

The models in this paper will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). We know that even the best data is not able to measure concepts perfectly. SEM accounts for potential measurement error in the models by including error terms in the analysis. In addition, concepts such as relationship quality and religiosity are complex, and not accurately measured by a single indicator. To address this, my structural equation models include latent variables that allow underlying concepts to be measured using multiple indicators. In cases where there might be mediating variables within the model, SEM also allows me to model both the direct and indirect effects of these variables. Finally, the use of SEM allows me to employ multi-group modeling techniques. With multi-group modeling, MPLUS software computes a single model structure across designated subgroups within the data. Unless otherwise specified, the multi-group modeling command assumes equivalent model structure for all groups but allows the parameter estimates to be freely estimated for each group. Parameter equality constraints can then be imposed to test for statistically significant differences between the estimates for each group.<sup>3</sup>

## *Measures*<sup>4</sup>

### Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this analysis are measures of the quality of the parent-child relationship. Reports about the quality of this relationship were provided by both the parent

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<sup>3</sup> SEM also allows the use of a polychoric correlation matrix to correct for categorical latent variable indicators. In this analysis, dichotomous variables are treated as categorical variables. However, due to the complexity of the multi-group model, it was necessary to treat ordinal variables with 5 or more categories as continuous variables. A comparison of the full model using categorical and continuous treatment of these variables produced similar results.

<sup>4</sup> Results for the measurement models of all latent variables are provided in Appendix B.

and teenage survey respondents. The primary focus of this analysis will be to understand how adolescents' religiosity influences their perceptions and reports about their relationships with their parents.

Surveyed teenagers were asked a series of questions about the mother figure and father figure residing in their household. The survey did not include questions about non-residential parents, so this analysis is limited to residential parents or parent figures. This gives us a picture of the relationships teenagers are involved with on a daily basis in their place of residence, a measure of the quality of relationships in the daily social context of the home. Teenagers were first asked about their mother or resident mother figure, and then asked the same series of questions about their father or resident father figure.<sup>5</sup> From these questions, I have created two measures of relationship quality, *relationship closeness* and *relationship warmth*. Each of these two concepts is measured as a separate latent variable for both mother and father. Relationship closeness is constructed as a latent variable consisting of four indicators: closeness, getting along, communication, and hanging out. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. How close or not close do you feel to your mother/father?<sup>6</sup> Extremely close, Very close, Fairly close, Somewhat close, Not very close, or Not close at all?
2. Generally, how well do you and your mother/father get along? Extremely well, Very well, Fairly well, Not so well, Pretty poorly, or Very badly?
3. How often do you talk with your mother/father about personal subjects, such as friendships, dating, or drinking? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?
4. How often, if at all, do you and your mother/father just have fun hanging out and doing things together? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

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<sup>5</sup> The questions were asked of the resident mother and father figures. This could include a parent, step-parent, grandparent, legal guardian, etc. Throughout the paper, the term "mother" and "father" will be used, however, these terms are meant to include all resident parental figures.

<sup>6</sup> The CATI program used to administer the survey was programmed to insert the appropriate term in place of "mother" or "father", such as "mother", "step-mother", "grandmother", "father's partner", etc.

Relationship warmth is constructed as a latent variable consisting of three indicators: affection, expression of love, and praise. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. How often does your mother/father tell you that s/he loves you?
2. How often does your mother/father hug you?
3. How often does your mother/father praise and encourage you?

### Independent Variables

There are a variety of factors related to the quality of relationships between teenagers and their parents. As adolescents get older and move through the stages of early, middle and late adolescence, relationships with parents may become more strained, therefore I control for the age of the teenager.<sup>7</sup> I also control for the sex of the teenager (female=1) to account for differences between relationships with a same-sex or opposite-sex parent. In addition, all models will control for residence in the South and the gender of the parent survey respondent.

The employment status of the parent is also a factor that has been linked with the quality of parent-child relationships. I include an indicator of whether or not the focal parent is working full-time. In models measuring relationship quality with mothers, an indicator of the mother's employment status is included. In models for father relationship quality, I use an indicator of father's employment status.

Education has also been linked to parenting style and parent-child relationships (Dornbusch 1989; Hilliard 1996). The NSYR survey contains measures of the education of both the resident mother and the resident father, if applicable. However, including controls

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<sup>7</sup> Age of adolescent is a continuous variable calculated based on number of days from their date of birth to the date of completion of the survey divided by 365.25 to obtain exact age in years. For 10 cases, teenagers reported their age instead of their date of birth. In these cases numerical age was used.

for both the education of the mother and the education of the father may be counter-productive, given that these would likely be similar and any education effect may disappear if both are included in the model. Some analyses use the education level of the father as the proxy variable for parent education. However, a significant portion of the teenagers surveyed do not have a residential father figure. So to avoid missing data in the case of single parents, I measure education as the highest level of parent education in the household. This approach also provides a more accurate measure of the potential educational resources of the household in cases where the mother has higher education levels than the father in the household. The measure of parental education is divided into five dummy variables: no parent has high school diploma; at least one parent has a high school diploma; at least one parent has some post-secondary education (but no college degree); and at least one parent has a four-year college degree or greater. The analysis of education in categorical terms will enable me to examine thresholds of significance for parental education.

In his review of the study of adolescence, Dornbusch (1989) calls for more studies that examine the role of family structure in family behaviors and relationships. We would expect that the family disruption characteristic of non-intact family types may lead to strained relationships between teenagers and their parents. In addition, we know that teenagers' relationships with biological parents can differ significantly from their relationships with step-parents or other non-biological parent figures. To account for the variation in relationship quality across various family structures, I have created family structure indicator variables. The indicator variables were created from a series of questions asked of the parent respondent about the family relationships in the household. These questions included: current marital status of the parent respondent, their relationship to the teen, their spouse or

cohabiting partner's relationship to the teen, and the sex of their partner (if living with an unmarried partner). Using the answers to these questions, I created a series of nineteen possible family types. These nineteen were collapsed into six groups of family types: 1. Two-parent biological (includes biological, adoptive and cohabiting), 2. Two-parents with biological mother and step-father, 3. Two-parents with biological father and step-mother, 4. Two-parent other (includes legal guardians and foster parents), 5. Single-parent related (biological, adoptive or grandparent), 6. Single-parent other (step- or foster parent, legal guardian, etc).

Research has also linked the quality of relationships between parents and children to immigrant generation (Harker 2001; Willgerodt and Thompson 2005). In order to control for this, I include measures for immigrant status. First generation teenagers are those who report that they were born outside of the United States and were not U.S. citizens at birth. Second generation teenagers were born in the U.S. but have at least one parent who was not born in the U.S. and was not born as a U.S. citizen in another country. Indicator variables for these two groups are included in all of the models, with all other respondents serving as the reference category.

### Religion Measures

*Religious service attendance* serves as a measure of religious participation. Religious service attendance is measured by a single survey question: "How often do you attend religious services, NOT counting weddings, baptisms, or funerals?" Response categories are coded as follows: 0=Never, 1=Few times a year, 2=Many times a year, 3=Once a month, 4=2-3 times a month, 5=Once a week, 6=More than once a week.

*Adolescent personal religiosity* is a latent variable with six indicators: importance of faith in daily life, importance of faith in major life decisions, closeness to God, commitment to live life for God, frequency of prayer, and frequency of scripture reading. These indicators are operationalized by the following survey questions:

1. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping how you live your daily life? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
2. How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping your major life decisions? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
3. How distant or close do you feel to God most of the time? (0=do not believe in God, 1=extremely distant, 2=very distant, 3=somewhat distant, 4=somewhat close, 5=very close, 6=extremely close)
4. Have you ever made a personal commitment to live your life for God? (0=no, 1=yes)
5. How often, if ever, do you pray by yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6>About once a day, 7=many times a day)
6. How often, if ever, do you read from the [Scriptures] to yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6>About once a day, 7=many times a day)

I measure religious solidarity between parents and teenagers as a function of shared beliefs, using a single variable constructed from answers to survey questions about similarity of beliefs. Religious teenagers were asked, “Would you say that your own religious beliefs are very similar, somewhat similar, somewhat different or very different from your mother / father?” Teenagers who did not identify themselves as religious were asked, “Would you say that your own beliefs about religion are very similar, somewhat similar, somewhat different or very different from your mother / father?” These questions capture the degree to which teens perceive themselves to have beliefs that are similar to their parents. In order to distinguish generic similarity of belief from particularly religious shared belief, I have

combined the response from these two questions into a single variable, *similar belief*, with the following categories:

1. Religious teenagers with beliefs that are very similar to mother / father
2. Religious teenagers with beliefs that are somewhat similar to mother / father
3. Non-religious teenagers and religious teenagers with beliefs that are somewhat different or very different from mother / father

This coding scheme represents the extent to which teens who hold religious beliefs perceive these beliefs to be similar to their parents.

### *Results*

The general structural model presented in Chapter Two demonstrated that adolescent personal religiosity and similarity of religious belief between parent and child are both positively related to relationship closeness and warmth. In addition to the direct effects, similarity of belief also operates indirectly through a positive path to adolescent personal religiosity. Adolescent religious service attendance was found to be negatively associated with relationship quality when personal religiosity and religious solidarity were included in the model. In the current analysis, I use this general model structure (Figure 1) to conduct multiple-group analysis with white and black adolescent respondents.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1 presents weighted frequencies of the religion indicators for the white and black teenagers in this analysis. Reports of regular religious service attendance are very similar for the two groups, with about 54 percent of white teenagers and 53 percent of black teenagers reporting that they attend church at least two to three times a month or more. However, black teenagers report higher levels of personal religiosity across all six of these measures.



For example, 68 percent of black teenagers say that faith is very or extremely important in their daily lives, compared with 49 percent of whites. And while 56 percent of whites have made a commitment to live for God, nearly 70 percent of blacks have done so. The final set of frequencies is for the measures of religious solidarity. When it comes to religious beliefs that are very similar between mother and adolescent, the frequencies for white and black respondents are 35 percent and 32 percent respectively. There is a slightly larger discrepancy in the reports about religious solidarity with fathers, with 32 percent of whites and 27 percent of blacks reporting that their religious beliefs are very similar to their father.

### Multivariate Models

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show the multivariate results for the freely estimated multi-group models for relationship quality with mothers and fathers, respectively. These are the baseline models with all of the parameter estimates freely estimated (no equality constraints) across the white and black sub-groups. The freely estimated model assumes that all of the parameter estimates vary significantly across the two groups. I am interested in testing to find out whether this assumption is accurate. In other words, if religion operates differently within each group, then we would expect to find that the parameter estimates for the religion variables differ for black and white adolescents. However, if religion has the same impact on parent-child relationships among black and white adolescents, then we would expect that the coefficient for each religion variable would be the same for each group of teenagers.

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 present the results of the series of hypotheses tests. I will first review the results of each hypothesis test and then discuss the implications for the final model. The null hypothesis,  $H_0$ , is that the estimate for each of the religion variables is the same for both

blacks and whites. In order to test this hypothesis, I imposed an equality constraint for all of the paths from religion variables in the model. This equality constraint (noted in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 as **equal**) means that the model is estimated with the assumption that the coefficient for a given variable will be the same for both white and black respondents. The constrained model is then tested as a nested model with the freely estimate baseline model (HB). The results of the chi-square difference test are shown at the bottom of column H0. The p-value for the nested model test is 0.000, indicating that the difference between the two models is statistically significant. Based on a statistically significant chi-square, I reject the null hypothesis that all the religion variables operate similarly for white and black respondents. Instead, I conclude that the religion variables are jointly significantly different across the two groups in my analysis.

In order to further specify the nature of these differences between black and white adolescents, I continue testing constrained models against the freely estimated model. In the series of nested model tests, I focus on one religion variable at a time, testing whether each variable operates similarly or differently across the two groups of teenagers. I first test for the joint difference of each variable on relationship quality (both closeness and warmth) and then test the path to each dimension of relationship quality.

H1-H3 (Tables 4.4 and 4.5) test the differential effects of religious service attendance. The chi-square difference tests for H1 are not significant, indicating that the paths from attendance to closeness and warmth do not jointly differ across racial groups for either mothers or fathers. Net of all the other variables in the model, religious service attendance is negatively associated with relationship quality to a similar degree across all the groups. However, when I test hypotheses for individual paths from attendance to closeness and

warmth, I find that in adolescent relationships with mothers, H2 (the hypothesis that the path from attendance to relationship closeness is equal for whites and blacks) is rejected by a chi-square difference test that is significant at the 0.05 level. The reverse is true for fathers; the test for H2 is not statistically significant, but the test for H3 (the hypothesis that the path from attendance to relationship warmth is equal for whites and blacks) reaches significance at the 0.1 level.

H4-H6 test the differential effects of adolescent personal religiosity. H4, the hypothesis that the joint effect of adolescent personal religiosity on relationship closeness and warmth is not significantly different between the two racial groups, is rejected at the 0.001 level for both mother and father relationship models. Upon examination of the tests for each individual path (H5 and H6), we find that each of these hypotheses are also rejected with statistically significant tests between the constrained models and the freely estimated model.<sup>8</sup>

The last set of hypotheses for direct religious effects on relationship closeness and warmth is H7-H9, testing the differential effects of similarity of beliefs to parents across white and black adolescents. In the six nested model tests performed for these hypotheses, none of the chi-square results are statistically significant. Therefore, I cannot reject the hypotheses that sharing similar beliefs as one's parent has the same effect on relationship quality outcomes for white and black adolescents. In models for both mothers and fathers, the direct paths from similar belief to relationship closeness and warmth are not statistically different between the two groups of teenagers.

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<sup>8</sup> For relationships with fathers (Table 4.5) the p-value for the chi-square test for H6 is 0.076 and thus only significant at the 0.1 level. However, the test of joint significance for the paths from personal religiosity to closeness and warmth is significant at the 0.01 level.

The final hypotheses in Tables 4.4 and 4.5, H10-H12, do not address direct paths from religion variables to relationship quality. These hypotheses concern the relationships between the religion variables in the model. In the structural model (Figure 4.1), similarity of belief is conceptualized as a predictor of adolescent religious service attendance and personal religiosity, thereby having an indirect effect on relationship quality through these two other dimensions of adolescents' religious lives. In this last set of nested model tests, I test the hypothesis that sharing similar beliefs with one's parent will influence an adolescents' frequency of religious service attendance and personal religious commitments in the same manner for black and white adolescents. In the models for mothers and fathers, all of these hypotheses are rejected with statistically significant chi-square difference tests. Based on these results, I conclude that sharing similar religious beliefs with one's parents has differential significance for white teenagers than it does for black teenagers with respect to their religious practices and commitments.

Taking into account the results of the chi-square difference tests discussed above (columns H0-H12 in Tables 4.4 and 4.5), I construct a final model that reflects the multi-group coefficients for white and black adolescents. The last column in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 indicates the equality constraints imposed in this final model. For each parameter estimate where the hypothesis of equality was not rejected by a significant chi-square difference test, the final model includes an equality constraint to hold the coefficient equal across the groups of white and black adolescents.<sup>9</sup> In the final model for relationships with mothers, the paths from attendance to warmth and from similar belief to closeness and warmth are all constrained to be equal across groups. In the final model for fathers, the paths from attendance to closeness

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<sup>9</sup> As an additional check, I conducted a set of nested model tests (not shown) allowing each constrained path to be freely estimated in comparison to the final constrained model. None of the results were significant, further confirming the lack of a significant difference for each path across racial groups.

and from similar belief to closeness and warmth are constrained to be equal across groups. All other parameter estimates in the model are freely estimated across the two groups. The results of the final models are shown in Tables 4.6 and 4.7. Coefficients that are constrained to be equal across the two groups are noted in italics in the tables.

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 illustrate the final models by highlighting the differences between white and black adolescents with regard to religion and relationship quality. The coefficients of paths that are significantly different for whites than for blacks are shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. Bold type indicates the larger coefficient for each path. Paths for which there is not a significant difference between blacks and whites do not have coefficients reported in these figures. In the general model discussed in Chapter Two, religious service attendance was negatively associated with measures of relationship quality. Net of personal religious commitments, the act of attending religious services seems to have a negative impact on parent-child relationships. This is perhaps because religious service attendance is not always voluntary for adolescence, and required attendance in the absence of personal religious commitment may create friction in the parent-child relationship. In the context of multi-group modeling for white and black adolescents, I find that where there are significant differences in the negative effect of attendance net of other religion variables, this pattern is more pronounced for white teenagers. In the model for relationships with mothers, there is no significant difference between the two groups in the parameter estimate for the path from attendance to relationship warmth and no statistically significant association between attendance and relationship warmth. However, for the path from attendance to relationship closeness, the coefficient for white adolescence is -0.056 while the coefficient for black adolescents is -0.018. Both coefficients are negative; however, the coefficient is for whites is

larger and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Among adolescents' relationships with their mothers, religious service attendance net of other variables in the model is associated with decrease in relationship quality for white teenagers, while there is no statistically significant association for black teenagers. A different pattern is found in the model for relationships with fathers. In this model, attendance is significantly and negatively related to relationship closeness and the coefficient does not vary significantly across the two groups. However, relationship warmth that appears to be adversely affected by religious service attendance only for white adolescents and not blacks. The coefficient for the path from attendance to warmth for whites is -0.049 and significant at the 0.001 level. For blacks, the coefficient is 0.009 and is not statistically significant. It appears that increased attendance net of other religion variables is related to decreased warmth in the relationships between white adolescents and their fathers, while there is no association between attendance and warmth for black adolescents.

Adolescent personal religiosity is significantly and positively related to both dimensions of relationship quality for white and black teenagers' relationships with their mothers and their fathers. Teenagers who report higher levels of personal religious commitment also report having better relationships with their parents. While all of the paths are in a positive direction, the coefficients for black adolescents are higher than those for white adolescents. Among blacks, the coefficients for the paths from personal religiosity to closeness and warmth with mothers are 0.421 and 0.408, respectively. The same paths for white teenagers have coefficients of 0.233 and 0.14. For relationships with fathers, the personal religiosity to closeness and warmth paths have coefficients of 0.510 and 0.397 for blacks and 0.220 and 0.204 for whites. Given the results of the nested model tests, we know that these differences

are statistically significant. According to these models, personal religiosity among black adolescents is more strongly associated with better relationship quality with parents than it is for white adolescents. Put another way, when all other variables in the model are held constant, increased personal religiosity is correlated with an increase in parental relationship quality. However, this increase is larger for black than for white teenagers. This dimension of religion appears to be more closely tied to the quality of family relationships in the lives of black adolescents than it is in the lives of white adolescents.

According to the nested model tests (H7-H9), the direct effect of similarity of belief with a parent on the quality of the relationship with that parent is statistically equivalent between black and white adolescents. The coefficients for these paths are constrained to be equal across groups in the models for relationships with mothers and fathers. For both groups of teenagers, sharing religious beliefs with a parent has a similar positive association with adolescent reports of the quality of the relationship with that parent.

While the effects of similar religious beliefs on relationship quality are consistent for blacks and whites, I find quite different results for the paths from similar belief to the other two religion variables in the model. In the model for mothers and fathers, similarity of belief is positively and significantly related to both religious service attendance and adolescent personal religiosity. Teenagers, both black and white, who hold religious beliefs that are similar to their parents attend religious service more often and report higher levels of personal religious commitment than teenagers whose beliefs are not similar to their parents. However, the degree of this association is much larger for white teenagers than it is for black teenagers. For whites, the coefficient for the path from similar belief to attendance is 1.093 in the model for mothers and 0.996 in the model for fathers. The same paths for blacks have

coefficients of 0.607 and 0.522, respectively. The similar belief to personal religiosity paths have coefficients of 0.659 and 0.628 for the mother and father models among whites compared to 0.302 and 0.238 for the mother and father models among blacks. In the latter set of comparisons, the coefficients for white adolescents are more than twice as large as the comparable coefficients for black adolescents. These results suggest that the religious lives of white adolescents are shaped more by levels of religious solidarity with parents than are the religious lives of black adolescents. For all adolescents, there are multiple factors at work in shaping the religious practices and commitments. It appears, however, that in the complex mix of religious influences, religious solidarity holds a larger place at the table for white teenagers than it does for black teenagers.

### *Discussion*

The analysis of the direct effects of religion on relationship quality between parents and adolescents provides qualified support for the hypothesis that positive religion effects will be stronger for blacks than whites. Additional findings regarding the relationships between the religion variables, specifically the paths from religious solidarity to attendance and personal religiosity, provide some unexpected and interesting results.

In the full model in Chapter Two, the direct path from attendance to relationship quality was negative. In the multi-group models for whites and blacks, where there were significant difference in the paths for whites and blacks, religious service attendance did not appear to have a significant negative association with relationship quality for blacks as it did for whites. This finding may be understood in light of the “semi-involuntary institution” thesis – the idea that in some communities, religious participation among blacks is not dictated by



personal preference as much it is by social norms and expectations. If an adolescent lives in such a community context, the expectation of religious participation would be less likely to come only from a parent. Rather, this expectation would be more general in nature. Even if it is in fact the parent who makes the requirement of the child to attend church, one could imagine that the resulting strain on the relationship would be mitigated by the adolescent's understanding of the larger social expectations at work, thus "de-personalizing" the expectation to some extent from the parent to the larger community. In the absence of these types of community expectations, white adolescents who find themselves required to attend religious services in the absence of personal religious commitments are more likely to hold their parents solely responsible, thus contributing to strain in the relationship. The absence of a significant negative relationship between attendance and relationship quality for blacks when compared to the significant negative finding for whites, lends indirect support for the general hypothesis that religion is more positively associated with increased relationship quality among black versus whites.

The level of personal religious commitment is a positive predictor of relationship quality for both white and black parent-child relationships. However, the larger effects for blacks suggest that the association between personal religiosity and family relationships is stronger for this group of adolescents. This finding is consistent with theoretical expectations about the influence of moral guidance and teaching with respect to family relationships. Given the multifunctionality of the church and the emphasis on family and family relationships within black religious traditions noted by scholars, black teenagers who are part of this black religious tradition may be being exposed to pro-family messages and teachings that are particularly powerful in their lives.

In addition to the emphasis on pro-family moral guidance, the Black church also has a history of acting as an “extended family” that offers multiple types of social support to members. Included in this support network are elements specifically geared toward supporting the families of community members (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Marks et al. 2005). To the extent that personal religious commitment serves as a proxy for embeddedness in one’s religious community, then higher levels of personal religiosity, and therefore more embeddedness, might result in more access to and benefit from increased the social support offered to families within the religious community. We saw in Chapter Three that the perception of social support from a religious congregation is mediating factor between personal religiosity and parent-child relationship quality. If black religious congregations offer social support for families that is different from the social support found in predominantly white religious congregations, then perhaps the stronger association between the personal religiosity of black adolescents and their relationships with parents is partially due to higher levels of actual and perceived congregational social support. This is a question deserving further examination in a subsequent analysis.

The third dimension of religion included in the model was religious solidarity, measured as similar beliefs between the adolescents and their parents. The comparison of the direct effects of similar belief on relationship quality between whites and blacks did not provide support for the research hypothesis. There were no statistically significant differences between the coefficients for the two groups. According to these results, sharing congruent beliefs with a parent has a similar positively association with relationship quality for both blacks and whites.

In addition to the comparison of the direct effects of religion on relationship quality of primary interest in this paper, the nested model testing also allowed a comparison of the relationships between the religion variables. Sharing similar beliefs with parents is positively related to the personal religious practices and beliefs of all the teenagers in this study. However, this effect appears to be a stronger for white adolescents than for black adolescents. Once again, we can look to the black religious subculture to help explain this finding. In the literature reviewed earlier in this paper, there seems to be general consensus that religion has historically played a significant role in black community life. With close ties between religious and secular arenas, a long legacy of mutual support and assistance between coreligionists, and the “church as family” mentality, religion appears to be a much more corporate experience in the Black church than it is in white churches. In contrast, predominately white religious traditions tend to be more individualistic and private in nature. The focus on the traditional nuclear family leaves religiosity more the responsibility of individuals and families rather than the entire religious community. Within a religious context that is more individualistic in nature, the religious lives of adolescents are likely to be highly influenced by the religious lives of their parents. In a more community-oriented religious context, parental religion may still be one of the strongest predictors of adolescent religiosity. However, there are also likely to be many more influences at the extended-family or community level that work alongside the parents’ contribution to the religious development of adolescents. This is illustrated by the findings of this analysis. While religious solidarity with parents is a strong positive predictor of religious belief and behavior for both black and white teenagers, the effects are nearly twice as large for whites as compared to blacks. Among the myriad factors at work in shaping the religious practices and

commitments of adolescents, religious solidarity with parents appears to be a larger piece of the puzzle for white teenagers than it is for black teenagers.

In summary, religion is a significant factor for both white and black adolescents in the quality of their relationships with their parents. However, the degree to which religion operates within these relationships varies across the two groups. These variations contribute to our larger understanding of the intersection between race and religion. Individual characteristics are important considerations in understanding the ways in which religion operates on a variety of life outcomes. However, this study suggests that religious context may also influence the ways in which religion operates at the individual level. Future studies should continue to specify the differential role of religion across different subgroups of the population, including but not limited to different racial groups.

**Table 4.1: Frequencies for White and Black Adolescents - Weighted Percentages**

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>
<b><i>Religious Practice:</i></b>		
<b>Attendance</b>		
Never	18.47	15.17
Few times a year	14.99	11.76
Many times a year	6.21	16.56
Once a month	6.69	4.07
2-3 times a month	11.60	15.82
Once a week	25.50	15.98
More than once a week	16.54	20.63
<b><i>Adolescent Personal Religiosity:</i></b>		
<b>Importance of Faith in Daily Life</b>		
Not at all	7.90	2.31
Not very Important	12.34	4.18
Somewhat Important	30.88	25.50
Very Important	29.53	36.24
Extremely Important	19.35	31.78
<b>Importance of Faith in Major Decisions</b>		
Not at all	8.65	3.50
Not very Important	11.79	4.25
Somewhat Important	31.45	27.49
Very Important	28.04	33.59
Extremely Important	20.07	31.17
<b>Commitment to Live for God</b>		
No	43.72	30.02
Yes	56.28	69.98
<b>Close to God</b>		
Extremely distant	3.05	1.92
Very distant	5.12	3.62
Somewhat distant	18.89	11.36
Somewhat close	34.13	33.46
Very close	25.29	28.30
Extremely close	9.91	20.98
Do not believe in God	3.62	0.36

**Table 4.1 (cont'd): Frequencies for White and Black Adolescents - Weighted Percentages**

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>
<b>Pray Alone</b>		
Never	16.09	6.16
Less than once a month	8.14	3.29
One to two times a month	13.56	10.85
About once a week	12.23	11.85
A few times a week	14.37	16.43
About once a day	21.65	22.43
Many times a day	13.97	28.99
<b>Read bible alone</b>		
Never	41.65	28.31
Less than once a month	15.02	11.69
One to two times a month	18.43	22.60
About once a week	8.63	10.82
A few times a week	7.64	13.02
About once a day	6.47	8.59
Many times a day	2.16	4.97
<b><i>Religious Solidarity:</i></b>		
<b>Beliefs Similar to Mother</b>		
Not similar	34.71	37.44
Somewhat similar	30.41	30.12
Very similar	34.89	32.44
<b>Beliefs Similar to Father</b>		
Not similar	38.41	41.66
Somewhat similar	29.25	31.68
Very similar	32.34	26.66
<b>N (unweighted)</b>	<b>2136</b>	<b>578</b>

**Table 4.2: Relationship Quality with Mothers - White and Black Adolescents (Freely Estimated SEM Models)**

	White				Black			
	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>			-0.055 ***	-0.014			-0.018	-0.018
<b>Adolescent Personal Religiosity</b>			0.231 ***	0.136 ***			0.437 ***	0.425 ***
<b>Similar Belief</b>	1.108 ***	0.656 ***	0.145 ***	0.118 ***	0.59 ***	0.322 ***	0.076	0.065
Female	0.227 **	0.316 ***	0.116 ***	0.036	0.224	0.122	-0.052	-0.062
Age	-0.057	-0.016	-0.041 ***	-0.082 ***	-0.005	-0.021	-0.033	-0.092 ***
Mom Works Full Time	0.041	0.015	-0.021	-0.029	-0.004	-0.056	0.063	0.014
South	0.505 ***	0.404 ***	-0.06	0.096 **	0.476 **	0.139 *	-0.029	-0.066
<i>Parent Education:</i>								
Less than High School	-0.114	0.391 ***	0.007	0.056	0.036	-0.093	0.137	0.116
Some beyond High School	0.177	-0.074	0.01	0.085 *	0.341	0.041	-0.06	0.092
B.A./B.S. degree or more	0.498 ***	-0.077	-0.071	0.109 **	0.288	-0.007	-0.093	0.188
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.183	0.017	0.019	-0.001	-0.476	0.15	0.159	0.024
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.107	0.038	-0.261 **	-0.631 ***	-0.333	0.225	-0.622 **	-0.527 *
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.175	0.274 *	0.139	-0.11	0.149	-0.105	0.236	0.106
1 Parent: Biological	-0.28 *	-0.135 *	0.018	0.001	-0.437	-0.069	0.035	0.137
1 Parent: Not Biological	-0.122	-0.107	0.181	-0.002	-0.381	0.125	-0.308 *	-0.117
Parent Gender	-0.089	0.074	0.064	0.055	0.305	0.006	0.357 ***	0.006
First Generation	0.399	0.06	-0.115	-0.068	-0.315	0.137	-0.389	-0.333
Second Generation	-0.635 *	-0.18	-0.104	-0.14	-0.395	-0.218	0.072	0.086
Chi-Square								648.777 ***
CFI								0.929
TLI								0.940
RMSEA								0.038
Close R-Square				0.177				0.295
Warm R-Square				0.216				0.298
Teen Religiosity R-Square				0.377				0.23
N				1975				528

Notes: Reference categories are High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\* p&lt; .05    \*\*p&lt; .01    \*\*\*p&lt; .001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 4.3: Relationship Quality with Fathers - White and Black Adolescents (Freely Estimated SEM Models)**

	White				Black			
	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>			-0.042 **	-0.049 **			-0.017	0.012
<b>Teen Personal Religiosity</b>			0.226 ***	0.204 ***			0.498 ***	0.408 ***
<b>Similar Belief</b>	1.006 ***	0.626 ***	0.224 ***	0.227 ***	0.507 ***	0.264 ***	0.116	0.131
Female	0.204 *	0.32 ***	-0.343 ***	0.297 ***	0.074	0.205 *	-0.58 ***	0.023
Age	-0.06	-0.015	-0.093 ***	-0.164 ***	-0.047	-0.033	-0.079	-0.171 ***
Mom Works Full Time	0.127	0.02	0.027	0.042	0.981 **	0.144	-0.311	-0.528 **
South	0.526 ***	0.404 ***	-0.042	0.098 *	0.721 **	0.27 **	0.151	-0.057
<i>Parent Education:</i>								
Less than High School	0.192	0.374 *	0.055	0.013	0.83	-0.224	0.357	0.17
Some beyond High School	0.21	-0.066	0.013	0.173 *	0.398	0.088	-0.044	0.096
B.A./B.S. degree or more	0.625 ***	-0.055	0.074	0.245 ***	0.533	0.122	0.048	0.276
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.011	0.132 *	-0.634 ***	-0.769 ***	-0.288	0.247 *	-0.52 **	-0.652 ***
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.381	-0.07	0.802 ***	0.42 ***	-0.173	0.036	0.383	0.488
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.129	0.256 *	0.023	-0.067	0.385	-0.08	-0.369	0.031
1 Parent: Biological	-0.306	-0.098	0.351 **	0.232	0.286	-0.18	0.472	0.388
1 Parent: Not Biological	0.844	0.099	0.445	0.242	0.675	0.428	-1.158 *	-1.247 *
Parent Gender	0.004	0.117 *	-0.207 **	-0.172 **	0.411	0.022	-0.176	-0.125
First Generation	0.405	0.059	-0.285	-0.158	-0.581	0.065	0.237	0.237
Second Generation	-0.626 *	-0.167	-0.007	-0.093	-0.131	-0.41 *	0.095	-0.015
Chi-Square								435.689 ***
CFI								0.942
TLI								0.952
RMSEA								0.037
Close R-Square				0.252				0.241
Warm R-Square				0.29				0.284
Teen Religiosity R-Square				0.349				0.233
N				1691				307

Notes: Reference categories are High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native

\* p&lt; .05    \*\*p&lt; .01    \*\*\*p&lt; .001 (two-tailed tests)



**Table 4.4: Nested Model Tests - Relationship Quality with Mothers**

	HB	H0	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6
	Baseline Model	Null Hypothesis	Attend to Close & Warm	Attend to Close	Attend to Warm	Personal to Close & Warm	Personal to Close	Personal to Warm
<b>Path:</b>								
Attend to Close	~	<b>equal</b>	equal	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~
Attend to Warm	~	<b>equal</b>	equal	~	equal	~	~	~
Personal to Close	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	<b>equal</b>	<b>equal</b>	~
Personal to Warm	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	<b>equal</b>	~	<b>equal</b>
Similar to Close	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Warm	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Attend	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Personal	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
CHI-SQUARE Difference Test (compared to Baseline Model)								
CHI-SQUARE		<b>104.424</b>	4.316	<b>3.868</b>	0.040	<b>39.749</b>	<b>11.127</b>	<b>22.011</b>
P-VALUE		<b>0.000</b>	0.114	<b>0.049</b>	0.841	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Notes: Columns in **bold** type indicate statistically significant chi-square difference tests;

~ indicates parameters that are freely estimated across whites and blacks, "equal" indicates parameters constrained to be equal for whites and blacks

**Table 4.4 (cont'd): Nested Model Tests - Relationship Quality with Mothers**

	HB	H7	H8	H9	H10	H11	H12	Final
	Baseline Model	Similar to Close & Warm	Similar to Close	Similar to Warm	Similar to Attend & Personal	Similar to Attend	Similar to Personal	Final Model
<b>Path:</b>								
Attend to Close	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Attend to Warm	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	equal
Personal to Close	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Personal to Warm	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Close	~	equal	equal	~	~	~	~	equal
Similar to Warm	~	equal	~	equal	~	~	~	equal
Similar to Attend	~	~	~	~	equal	equal	~	~
Similar to Personal	~	~	~	~	equal	~	equal	~
CHI-SQUARE Difference Test (compared to Baseline Model)								
CHI-SQUARE		3.008	1.884	1.249	<b>83.346</b>	<b>15.715</b>	<b>51.689</b>	3.317
P-VALUE		0.219	0.170	0.264	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	0.344

Notes: Columns in **bold** type indicate statistically significant chi-square difference tests;

~ indicates parameters that are freely estimated across whites and blacks, "equal" indicates parameters constrained to be equal for whites and blacks

**Table 4.5: Nested Model Tests - Relationship Quality with Fathers**

	HB	H0	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6
	Baseline Model	Null Hypothesis	Attend to Close & Warm	Attend to Close	Attend to Warm	Personal to Close & Warm	Personal to Close	Personal to Warm
Attend to Close	~	<b>equal</b>	equal	equal	~	~	~	~
Attend to Warm	~	<b>equal</b>	equal	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~
Personal to Close	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	<b>equal</b>	<b>equal</b>	~
Personal to Warm	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	<b>equal</b>	~	<b>equal</b>
Similar to Close	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Warm	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Attend	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Personal	~	<b>equal</b>	~	~	~	~	~	~
Chi-square Difference Test (compared to Baseline Model)								
Chi-Square		<b>41.212</b>	3.511	0.466	<b>3.489</b>	<b>9.278</b>	<b>5.502</b>	<b>3.151</b>
p Value		<b>0.000</b>	0.170	0.495	<b>0.062</b>	<b>0.009</b>	<b>0.019</b>	<b>0.076</b>

Notes: Columns in **bold** type indicate statistically significant chi-square difference tests;

~ indicates parameters that are freely estimated across whites and blacks, "equal" indicates parameters constrained to be equal for whites and blacks

**Table 4.5 (cont'd): Nested Model Tests - Relationship Quality with Fathers**

	HB	H7	H8	H9	H10	H11	H12	Final
	Baseline Model	Similar to Close & Warm	Similar to Close	Similar to Warm	Similar to Attend & Personal	Similar to Attend	Similar to Personal	Final Model
Attend to Close	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	equal
Attend to Warm	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Personal to Close	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Personal to Warm	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Similar to Close	~	equal	equal	~	~	~	~	equal
Similar to Warm	~	equal	~	equal	~	~	~	equal
Similar to Attend	~	~	~	~	<b>equal</b>	<b>equal</b>	~	~
Similar to Personal	~	~	~	~	<b>equal</b>	~	<b>equal</b>	~
Chi-square Difference Test (compared to Baseline Model)								
Chi-Square		1.105	1.126	1.135	<b>52.908</b>	<b>8.830</b>	<b>33.301</b>	1.785
p Value		0.293	0.289	0.287	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>0.000</b>	0.406

Notes: Columns in **bold** type indicate statistically significant chi-square difference tests;

~ indicates parameters that are freely estimated across whites and blacks, "equal" indicates parameters constrained to be equal for whites and blacks

**Table 4.6: Relationship Quality with Mothers - White and Black Adolescents (Final Model)**

	White				Black			
	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>			-0.056 ***	<i>-0.016</i>			-0.018	<i>-0.016</i>
<b>Adolescent Personal Religiosity</b>			0.233 ***	0.14 ***			0.421 ***	0.408 ***
<b>Similar Belief</b>	1.093 ***	0.659 ***	0.133 ***	0.11 ***	0.607 ***	0.302 ***	0.133 ***	0.11 ***
Female	0.228 **	0.316 ***	0.115 ***	0.035	0.223	0.122	-0.05	-0.061
Age	-0.057	-0.016	-0.041 ***	-0.082 ***	-0.005	-0.021	-0.033	-0.092 ***
Mom Works Full Time	0.042	0.015	-0.021	-0.029	-0.004	-0.056	0.062	0.013
South	0.504 ***	0.404 ***	-0.061	0.096 **	0.475 **	0.139 *	-0.026	-0.064
<i>Parent Education:</i>								
Less than High School	-0.114	0.391 ***	0.007	0.054	0.036	-0.092	0.135	0.114
Some beyond High School	0.177	-0.074	0.01	0.086 *	0.341	0.041	-0.059	0.092
B.A./B.S. degree or more	0.499 ***	-0.077	-0.071	0.11 **	0.288	-0.007	-0.093	0.188
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.183	0.017	0.019	-0.001	-0.477	0.15	0.16	0.028
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.107	0.038	-0.261 **	-0.631 ***	-0.321	0.224	-0.618 **	-0.522 *
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.174	0.274 *	0.139	-0.111	0.148	-0.105	0.234	0.104
1 Parent: Biological	-0.279 *	-0.135 *	0.019	0.001	-0.436	-0.069	0.034	0.137
1 Parent: Not Biological	-0.122	-0.108	0.181	-0.001	-0.381	0.125	-0.306 *	-0.114
Parent Gender	-0.088	0.074	0.064	0.055	0.302	0.006	0.358 ***	0.006
First Generation	0.399	0.06	-0.116	-0.068	-0.304	0.137	-0.385	-0.329
Second Generation	-0.634 *	-0.18	-0.103	-0.141	-0.395	-0.217	0.068	0.083
Chi-Square								645.589 ***
CFI								0.93
TLI								0.941
RMSEA								0.038
Close R-Square				0.172				0.308
Warm R-Square				0.213				0.307
Teen Religiosity R-Square				0.379				0.211
N				1975				528

Notes: Reference categories are High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native;  
Coefficients constrained to be equal for Whites and Blacks are in italics

\* p< .05    \*\*p< .01    \*\*\*p< .001 (two-tailed tests)

**Table 4.7: Relationship Quality with Fathers - White and Black Adolescents (Final Model)**

	White				Black			
	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm	Attendance	Personal	Close	Warm
<b>Attendance</b>			<i>-0.038 **</i>	<i>-0.049 ***</i>			<i>-0.038 **</i>	0.009
<b>Adolescent Personal Religiosity</b>			0.22 ***	0.204 ***			0.51 ***	0.397 ***
<b>Similar Belief</b>	0.996 ***	0.628 ***	<i>0.215 ***</i>	<i>0.216 ***</i>	0.522 ***	0.238 ***	<i>0.215 ***</i>	<i>0.216 ***</i>
Female	0.204 *	0.32 ***	<i>-0.342 ***</i>	0.297 ***	0.074	0.205 *	<i>-0.581 ***</i>	0.026
Age	-0.06	-0.015	<i>-0.093 ***</i>	<i>-0.164 ***</i>	-0.047	-0.033	<i>-0.079</i>	<i>-0.171 ***</i>
Mom Works Full Time	0.127	0.021	0.026	0.042	0.981 **	0.144	<i>-0.292</i>	<i>-0.523 **</i>
South	0.526 ***	0.404 ***	<i>-0.042</i>	0.097 *	0.721 **	0.27 **	0.163	<i>-0.051</i>
<i>Parent Education:</i>								
Less than High School	0.192	0.374 *	0.056	0.013	0.83	-0.224	0.377	0.171
Some beyond High School	0.21	-0.066	0.012	0.173 *	0.398	0.088	<i>-0.037</i>	0.097
B.A./B.S. degree or more	0.625 ***	-0.055	0.071	0.244 ***	0.533	0.122	0.058	0.279
2 Parents: Biological Mother	-0.011	0.132 *	<i>-0.633 ***</i>	<i>-0.769 ***</i>	<i>-0.288</i>	0.247 *	<i>-0.529 **</i>	<i>-0.651 ***</i>
2 Parents: Biological Father	-0.381	-0.069	0.803 ***	0.421 ***	-0.173	0.036	0.379	0.487
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0.129	0.256 *	0.023	-0.067	0.385	-0.08	-0.36	0.031
1 Parent: Biological	-0.306	-0.098	0.352 **	0.232	0.286	-0.18	0.48	0.387
1 Parent: Not Biological	0.844	0.099	0.442	0.242	0.675	0.429	<i>-1.149 *</i>	<i>-1.24 *</i>
Parent Gender	0.004	0.117 *	<i>-0.207 **</i>	<i>-0.172 **</i>	0.411	0.022	<i>-0.168</i>	<i>-0.123</i>
First Generation	0.405	0.059	<i>-0.286</i>	<i>-0.159</i>	<i>-0.581</i>	0.065	0.224	0.236
Second Generation	<i>-0.626 *</i>	<i>-0.167</i>	<i>-0.006</i>	<i>-0.093</i>	<i>-0.131</i>	<i>-0.41 *</i>	0.097	<i>-0.019</i>
Chi-Square								425.111 ***
CFI								0.944
TLI								0.953
RMSEA								0.036
Close R-Square				0.248				0.260
Warm R-Square				0.287				0.300
Teen Religiosity R-Square				0.350				0.218
N				1691				307

Notes: Reference categories are High School Education, 2 biological parents, and Third Generation/Native;  
Coefficients constrained to be equal for Whites and Blacks are in italics

\* p< .05    \*\*p< .01    \*\*\*p< .001 (two-tailed tests)

Figure 4.1: General Structural Model

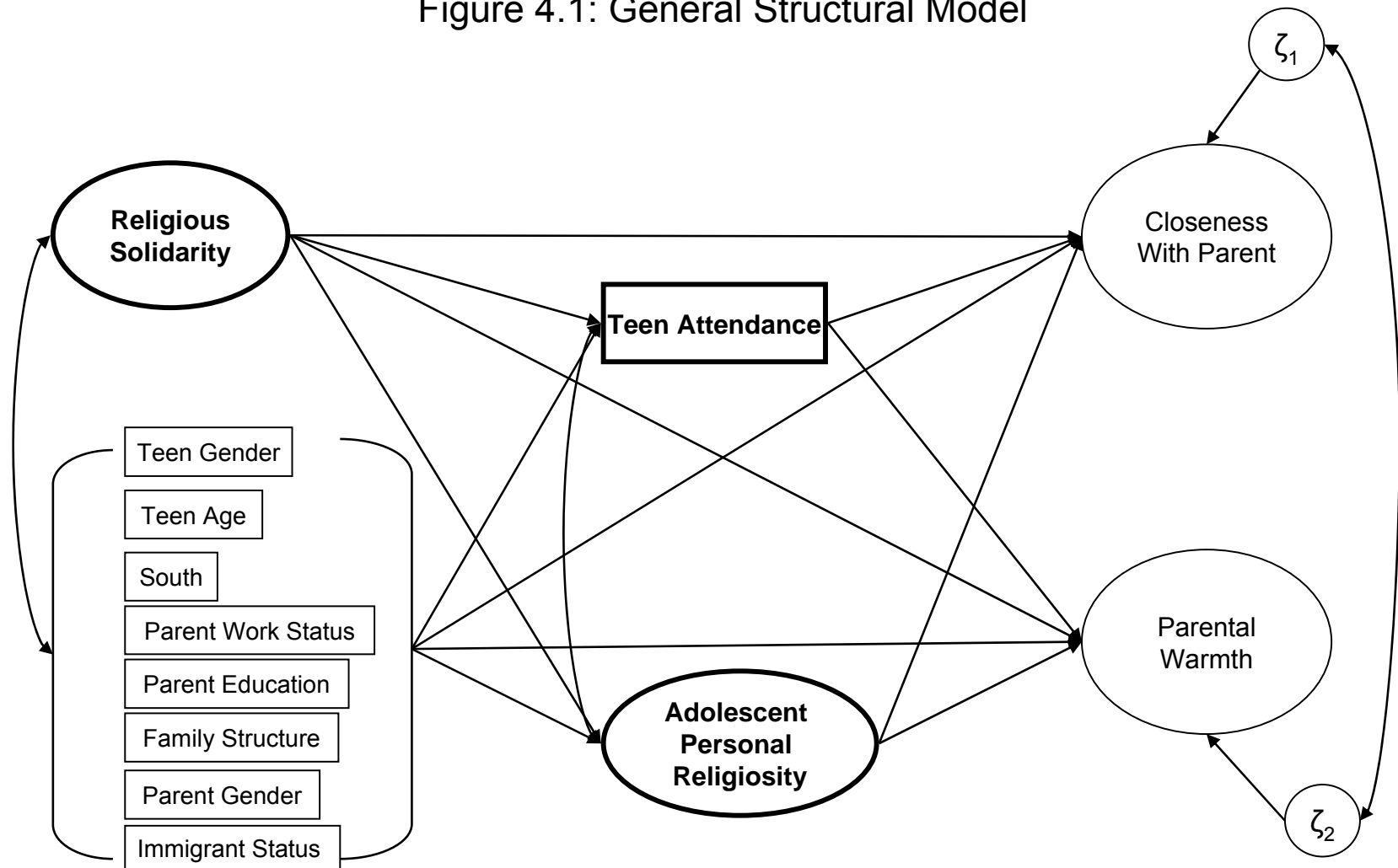


Figure 4.2: Religion and Relationship Quality with Mothers  
Final Model

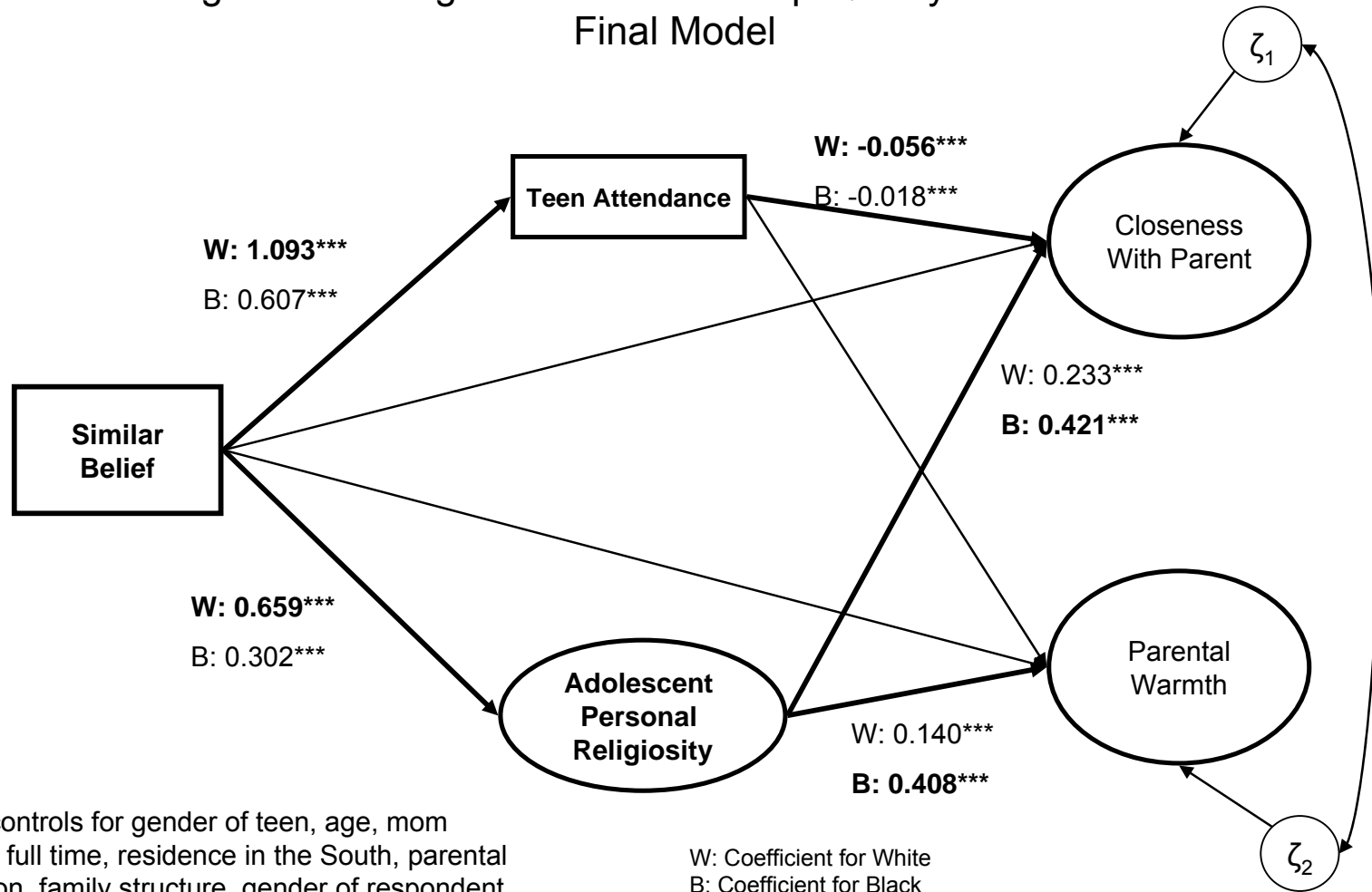
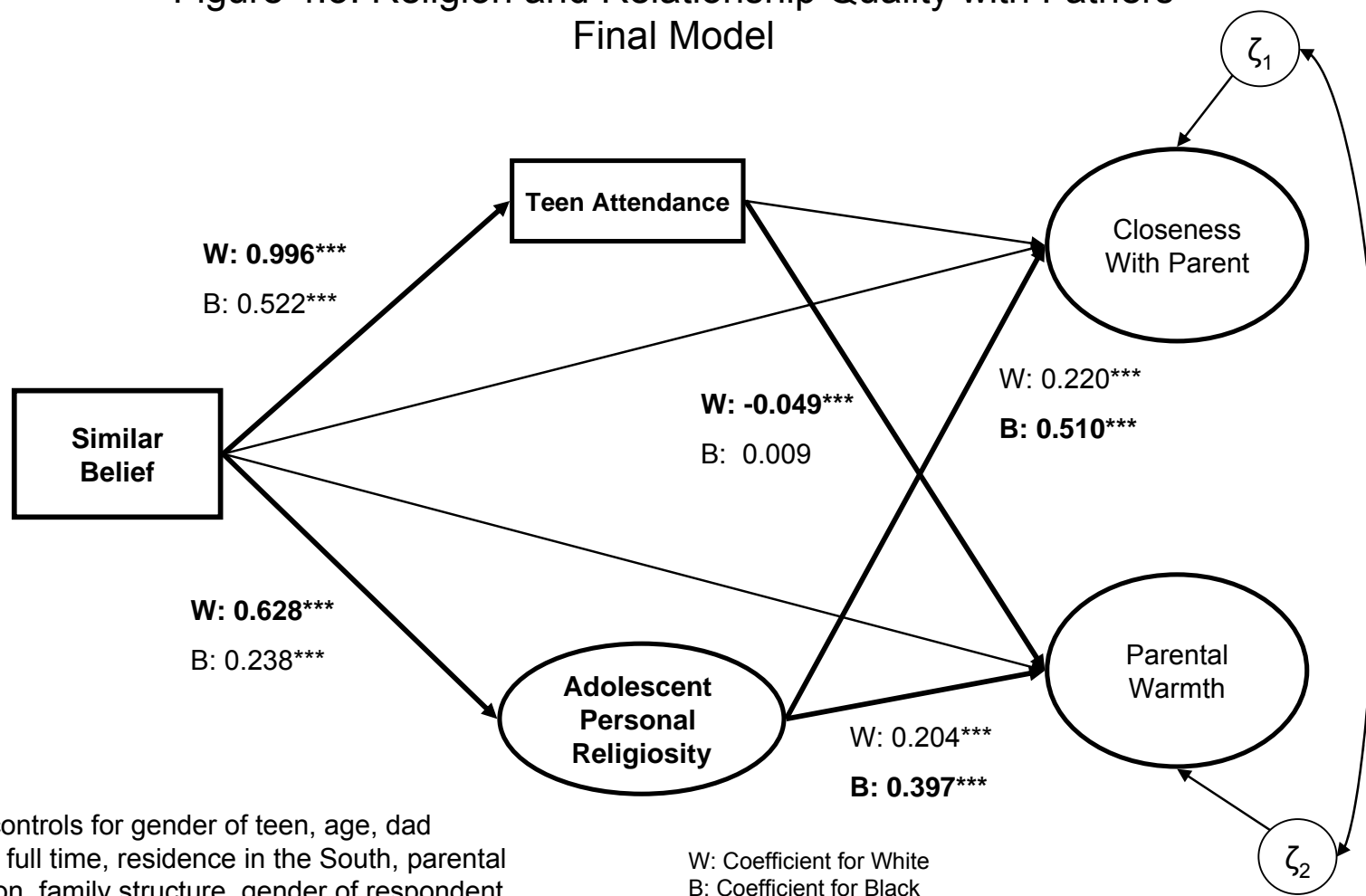




Figure 4.3: Religion and Relationship Quality with Fathers  
Final Model



## CHAPTER V

### Conclusion

The three papers presented here contribute to our knowledge about the relationships between adolescents and their parents. Previous research has documented the significance of parent-child relationships and the need to better understand these relationships. In examining the role of religion in parent-child relationship quality, the research presented here brings us not only to a fuller understanding of the religious lives of teenagers, but also another step closer in the process of understanding the dynamics of the parent-adolescent relationship.

The general model in Chapter One addresses two methodological issues that are carried through all three papers. First, these papers have addressed the need to include the religious characteristics of adolescents in the research on family relationships. Past research has tended to focus primarily on the religious characteristics of parents, assuming either that parental religiosity has the most important influence on parent-child dynamics, or that parental religiosity is a sufficient proxy for the adolescent's religion. It is true that adolescents often closely reflect their parents religiously. However, during this time of increasing autonomy, many adolescents are beginning to develop independent religious identities. As was demonstrated in Chapter One, the personal religious beliefs and practices of adolescents are related to relationship quality even when controlling for similar religious beliefs between parents and teenagers. The analyses of all three papers are focused on the

religious lives of teenagers and exploring the connection between adolescent religion and parent-child relationship quality.

The analyses of adolescent religion in these papers address a second shortcoming in much of the literature by exploring multiple dimensions of religion. Rather than relying on a single indicator of religion, such as religious service attendance or importance of faith, the models include multiple facets of religion in an effort to better understand the unique contribution of the various dimensions of religion. In addition, the use of Structural Equation Models allows the use of latent variable for the measurement of religion. Latent variables take advantage of the many religious indicators available in the National Survey of Youth and Religion. Instead of including them as separate variables in the model where they would “compete” against each other, creating latent variables allows me to take full advantage of multiple measures of an underlying latent construct to better measure the religious concepts at work in the models while also accounting for measurement error. In this way, these analyses have contributed to a more comprehensive measurement of religion.

In addition to the methodological advances, these papers have also contributed to our theoretical understandings of the intersection of religion and parent-child relationship dynamics. From Chapter One we see the importance of religious solidarity between adolescents and their parents. Through both direct and indirect paths, religious solidarity is positively associated with the quality of relationships that adolescents report with their parents. Support for the theory about the connection between pro-family moral beliefs and relationship quality was more equivocal. The two proxy measures of pro-family moral beliefs – religious service attendance and personal religiosity – had opposite effects in the full model, with service attendance being negatively rather than positively associated with

relationship quality. While not in the expected direction, this finding still contributes to a refinement of theoretical expectations regarding religious belief and practice and parent-child relationship quality. In particular, net of personal religious commitment on the part of the adolescent, compulsory attendance may counteract any exposure to pro-family teachings to result in the negative relationship to parent-child relationship quality. However, religious salience as a proxy for commitment to pro-family religious messages – measured by adolescent personal religiosity – is positively related to parent-child relationship quality. The strong connection between personal religiosity and relationship quality offers support for the theoretical expectation that religion provides guidance and directives that contribute to better relationships between adolescents and their parents.

Chapter Two explores the role of social resources as mediating factors in the link between religion and parent-child relationship quality. Drawing on previous research, particularly the religion and health literature, I examine several hypotheses regarding social support and social capital as possible mechanisms of religious influence. The analysis confirms that social support and social control mediate the previously established relationship between religion and relationship quality for adolescents and their parents. Among teenagers affiliated with a religious congregation, increased personal religiosity is associated with greater perceptions of congregational social support and greater numbers of supportive adult ties. These social resources are related in turn to better quality relationships between adolescents and their parents. In addition to pointing to fruitful areas of future research regarding social support and social capital, the findings in Chapter Two provide support for the theoretical expectations of Smith (2003) and others suggesting that religion contributes to

the well-being of adolescents – in particular the quality of their family relationships – through the social resources that are available to religiously involved adolescents.

Chapter Three serves as an example of the ways in which the general model from Chapter One can be further specified across different subgroups within the data. The comparison between white and black adolescents demonstrates that the religious life of both white and black adolescents is an important factor in how they relate to their parents. While the connection between religion and relationship quality is similarly patterned for both groups, the variable strength of those associations highlights significant differences across these two groups of teenagers. These findings suggest that cultural context, specifically the religious history and experience of the black community, may be an important factor in the way in which religion operates in the lives of individuals. In addition, the analysis highlights the importance of examining the differential effects of religion across specific subgroups in the population.

### *Limitations of Current Research*

The three papers presented here draw on cross-sectional data analysis. As was discussed within each paper, the use of cross-sectional data involves limitations in our ability to draw conclusions about causality and the direction of the effects being examined. In each of the three papers, I draw on theoretical expectations about the influence of religion in the lives of adolescents and conclude that religion is a significant predictor of parent-adolescent relationship quality. However, given that the available data measure both religiosity and relationship quality at the same point in time, they do not make it possible to ascertain with certainty that religious commitments precede the development of relationship quality

between parents and adolescents. In fact, it is likely that the relationship between religiosity and parent-adolescent relationship quality is reciprocal in nature. Adolescents' relationships with their parents appear to benefit from higher levels of religious engagement.

However, it is also possible that when teenagers have close relationships with their parents, they are more likely to embrace the religious tradition of their parents and become more committed to their religion. Increased religiosity reinforces relationships between parents and adolescents, and the quality of these relationships may also reinforce religious adherence. Acknowledging the possibility of reciprocal causation, these papers examine one portion of this relationship given our theoretical expectations about how religion operates within the dynamics of family relationships. Future work with longitudinal data will allow more nuanced assessment of the complex relationship between religiosity and parent-adolescent relationship quality.

### *Future Research*

The papers presented here represent the beginning of what I hope to be a larger research agenda. The findings raised a number of questions that I hope to continue to pursue in future analyses. The unique contribution of the different dimensions of religion and the presence of mediating variables such as social support and social control indicate that there is more that could be gained by continuing to identify potential mechanisms by which religion is related to family relationships. Further specifying the different dimensions of religion at work in these relationships will continue to broaden our understanding of the ways in which religion operates, as well as provide insight into the dynamics of family life and the factors, both religious and non-religious, that contribute to family relationships. The findings regarding

religious solidarity and social support offer a particular opportunity to make comparisons between religious and non-religious factors that are related to relationship quality. In future analyses, I hope to compare religious and secular sources of solidarity between adolescents and parents, as well as religious and secular sources of social support. This type of analysis will address questions about whether there is a unique religious effect from these variables or whether religion is just one of a number of possible means by which the particular mechanisms of solidarity and support operate. Finally, the third chapter on race differences highlights the need to continue to explore the link between religion and family relationships across various subpopulations of the larger sample. Additional insight could be gained through explorations of the differential effects of religion across gender, age and socioeconomic status, as well as comparisons of different religious traditions and denominational affiliations.

The most important feature of my future research agenda, however, will be the availability of additional waves of data from the National Survey of Youth and Religion. With data from a second wave available in the summer of 2006 and plans for a third wave underway, the potential of longitudinal analysis opens up a wide range of possibilities for future study in this area. In the three papers presented, cautious inferences about direction and causation are based on theoretical expectations about the relationships being examined. However, in the future I will be able to re-examine these relationships in light of longitudinal data and be able to assess directionality with more confidence. In addition to the contribution to causal arguments, longitudinal data will also allow me to pursue questions of interest regarding the ways in which adolescent religious commitments and family relationships change over time. I expect that neither of these areas of an adolescent's life is static, with the years following

adolescence an important time of religious change as well as shifts in family dynamics.

Longitudinal data provide the opportunity to examine both of these individual trajectories and also to continue to examine the intersection of religion and family life over time.



## Appendix A: Descriptive Statistics

	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b><i>Relationship Quality</i></b>			
<u><i>Mother</i></u>			
Close	1-6	5.06	0.96
Get Along	1-6	4.86	0.83
Hang Out	1-5	3.57	1.04
Talk	1-5	3.60	1.18
Says "I Love You"	1-5	4.48	0.91
Affection	1-5	4.15	1.09
Praise and Encouragement	1-5	4.44	0.84
<u><i>Father</i></u>			
Close	1-6	4.54	1.25
Get Along	1-6	4.73	1.00
Hang Out	1-5	3.41	1.20
Talk	1-5	2.88	1.26
Says "I Love You"	1-5	3.79	1.29
Affection	1-5	3.46	1.34
Praise and Encouragement	1-5	4.04	1.09
<b><i>Religion</i></b>			
<u><i>Public Religious Practice</i></u>			
Religious Service Attendance	0-6	3.13	2.19
<u><i>Personal Religiosity</i></u>			
Faith in daily life	1-5	3.45	1.13
Faith in major decisions	1-5	3.44	1.16
Live for God	0, 1	0.56	0.50
Close to God	0-6	4.02	1.36
Pray alone	1-7	4.37	2.01
Read Bible	1-7	2.60	1.74
<u><i>Religious Solidarity</i></u>			
Same Religion as Mother	0, 1	0.70	0.46
Attend with Mother	0, 1	0.54	0.50
Similar Beliefs as Mother	0-2	0.96	0.84
Same Religion as Father	0, 1	0.65	0.48
Attend with Father	0, 1	0.40	0.49
Similar Beliefs as Father	0-2	0.90	0.83
Pray with parent	0, 1	0.41	0.49

**Appendix A: Descriptive Statistics (continued)**

	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b><i>Social Support</i></b>			
Adults in congregation easy to talk to	1-5	4.03	1.08
Adults in congregation who give encouragement	0, 1	0.80	0.40
Congregation good place for serious issues	1-5	4.08	1.03
Congregation is warm and welcoming	1-4	3.66	0.67
Supportive adult ties	0-100	5.71	7.30
<b><i>Control Variables</i></b>			
Adolescent Female	0, 1	0.49	0.50
Adolescent Age	13-18	15.50	1.43
Race - White	0, 1	0.65	0.48
Race - Black	0, 1	0.18	0.38
Race - Hispanic	0, 1	0.12	0.32
Race - Other	0, 1	0.06	0.23
Residence in the South	0, 1	0.42	0.49
Parent Education: Less than High School	0, 1	0.06	0.24
Parent Education: High School Diploma	0, 1	0.19	0.39
Parent Education: Some beyond High School	0, 1	0.37	0.48
Parent Education: B.A./B.S. degree or more	0, 1	0.38	0.48
2 Biological Parents	0, 1	0.51	0.50
2 Parents: Biological Mother	0, 1	0.15	0.35
2 Parents: Biological Father	0, 1	0.03	0.18
2 Parents: Neither Biological	0, 1	0.03	0.17
1 Parent: Biological	0, 1	0.25	0.43
1 Parent: Non-biological	0, 1	0.03	0.17
Parent Gender	0, 1	0.82	0.39
First Generation	0, 1	0.03	0.18
Second Generation	0, 1	0.08	0.27
Third Generation / Native	0, 1	0.89	0.31
Mom works full time	0, 1	0.55	0.50
Dad works full time	0, 1	0.86	0.35

## Appendix B: Measurement Models

### *Relationship Quality*

*Relationship closeness* is constructed as a latent variable consisting of four indicators: closeness, getting along, communication, and hanging out. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. **Close:** How close or not close do you feel to your mother/father?<sup>1</sup> Extremely close, Very close, Fairly close, Somewhat close, Not very close, or Not close at all?
2. **Get Along:** Generally, how well do you and your mother/father get along? Extremely well, Very well, Fairly well, Not so well, Pretty poorly, or Very badly?
3. **Hang Out:** How often do you talk with your mother/father about personal subjects, such as friendships, dating, or drinking? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?
4. **Talk:** How often, if at all, do you and your mother/father just have fun hanging out and doing things together? Very often, Fairly often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

*Relationship warmth* is constructed as a latent variable consisting of three indicators: affection, expression of love, and praise. These indicators are operationalized by the following questions:

1. **Love:** How often does your mother/father tell you that s/he loves you?
2. **Affection:** How often does your mother/father hug you?
3. **Praise:** How often does your mother/father praise and encourage you?

The measurement model includes both latent variables with the error terms covaried in the model (see Figure B.1). Table B.1 shows the results of the measurement models for relationship quality with mothers and relationship quality with fathers. Both of the models have good measures of overall fit as well as good component fit. Due to large sample size, the chi-square for both models is statistically significant. However, the CFI and TLI

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<sup>1</sup> The CATI program used to administer the survey was programmed to insert the appropriate term in place of “mother” or “father”, such as “mother”, “step-mother”, “grandmother”, “father’s partner”, etc.

measures are all above the 0.950 mark. Additionally, all of the indicators have coefficients that are statistically significant at the 0.001 level and  $R^2$ s that are 0.400 or higher.

### *Adolescent Personal Religiosity*

*Adolescent personal religiosity* is a latent variable with six indicators: importance of faith in daily life, importance of faith in major life decisions, closeness to God, commitment to live life for God, frequency of prayer, and frequency of scripture reading. These indicators are operationalized by the following survey questions:

1. **Faith in daily life:** How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping how you live your daily life? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
2. **Faith in major decisions:** How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping your major life decisions? (1=not at all, 2=not very important, 3=somewhat important, 4=very important, 5=extremely important)
3. **Close to God:** How distant or close do you feel to God most of the time? (0=do not believe in God, 1=extremely distant, 2=very distant, 3=somewhat distant, 4=somewhat close, 5=very close, 6=extremely close)
4. **Live for God:** Have you ever made a personal commitment to live your life for God? (0=no, 1=yes)
5. **Pray:** How often, if ever, do you pray by yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6>About once a day, 7=many times a day)
6. **Read scripture:** How often, if ever, do you read from the [Scriptures] to yourself alone? (1=never, 2=less than once a month, 3=1-2 times a month, 4=about once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6>About once a day, 7=many times a day)

Figure B.2 shows the structure of the measurement model for adolescent personal religiosity.

Table B.2 shows that the model has good measures of overall fit as well as good component fit. Due to large sample size, the chi-square value is statistically significant. Similar to the measurement models for relationship quality, this model has CFI and TLI measures near 0.950. The coefficients for the indicators are also statistically significant at the 0.001 level with  $R^2$ s that are 0.400 or higher.

### *Shared Religiosity*

*Shared religiosity* is as a latent variable with three indicators: attend together, same religion, and pray with parent. Attend together is an indicator variable where 1=parent and teenager attend the same religious congregation and 0=parent and teenager do not attend the same religious congregation. Same religion is also an indicator variable where 1=parent and teenager reported the same religious identity and 0=parent and teenager reported a different religious identity. Pray with parent is a yes/no indicator variable based on the survey question: “In the last year, have you prayed out loud or silently together with one or both of your parents, other than at mealtimes or at religious services?”

The structure for the measurement model is shown in Figure B.3. Table B.3 shows the results of the measurement model for shared religiosity with mother and shared religiosity with father. Both models have good measures of overall fit as well as good component fit. Due to large sample size, the chi-square is statistically significant. However, both models have CFI and TLI measures above the 0.950 mark. The coefficients for the indicators are also statistically significant at the 0.001 level with  $R^2$ s that are 0.400 or higher.

### *Congregational Social Support*

*Congregational social support* is a latent variable with four indicators (see Figure B.4). I use four survey questions as indicators of the teens’ subjective assessment of the supportive nature of their religious congregation. The first question is “When you think about most of the adults in your religious congregation, how easy or hard are they to talk with and get to know.” The second question is “Are there adults in your religious congregation, other than family members, who you enjoy talking with or who give you lots of encouragement?” The

third question is “How good or not good a place is your religious congregation to go if you wanted to talk about serious issues like family problems, alcohol, or troubles at school?” The final question is “Does your religious congregation feel like a warm and welcoming place for you, usually, sometimes, rarely or never?”

The measurement model for congregational social support indicates a very good fit between the latent variable and the four indicators. As shown in Table B.4, the overall fit indices are each above 0.98. The coefficients for the indicators are also statistically significant at the 0.001 level with  $R^2$ s around 0.400.

**Table B.1: Relationship Quality Measurement Models**

	Mother			Father		
	Coefficient	S.E.	R2	Coefficient	S.E.	R2
<b>Closeness</b>						
<i>Close</i>	1.000	0.000	0.633	1.000	0.000	0.798
<i>Get Along</i>	0.913 ***	0.021	0.527	0.887 ***	0.014	0.628
<i>Hang Out</i>	0.872 ***	0.020	0.482	0.838 ***	0.014	0.560
<i>Talk</i>	0.807 ***	0.021	0.412	0.799 ***	0.015	0.510
<b>Warmth</b>						
<i>Love</i>	1.000	0.000	0.729	1.000	0.000	0.810
<i>Affection</i>	0.963 ***	0.023	0.676	0.956 ***	0.015	0.741
<i>Praise</i>	0.811 ***	0.022	0.479	0.914 ***	0.014	0.677
CFI	0.961			0.970		
TLI	0.968			0.982		
RMSEA	0.096			0.040		
$\chi^2$	316.943 ***			359.286 ***		
N	3035			2399		

**Table B.2: Adolescent Personal Religiosity Measurement Model**

	Coefficient	S.E.	R2
<i>Importance of Faith - Daily Life</i>	1.000	0.000	0.834
<i>Importance of Faith - Major Decisions</i>	0.968 ***	0.009	0.781
<i>Live for God</i>	0.790 ***	0.015	0.520
<i>Close to God</i>	0.804 ***	0.010	0.539
<i>Pray</i>	0.817 ***	0.010	0.556
<i>Read Scripture</i>	0.736 ***	0.012	0.452
CFI	0.971		
TLI	0.982		
RMSEA	0.138		
$\chi^2$	493.06 ***		
N	3193		

**Table B.3: Shared Religiosity Measurement Models**

	Mother			Father		
	Coefficient	S.E.	R2	Coefficient	S.E.	R2
<b>Closeness</b>						
<i>Attend same congregation</i>	1.000	0.000	0.603	1.000	0.000	0.676
<i>Same religious identity</i>	0.945 ***	0.031	0.539	0.960 ***	0.032	0.624
<i>Prays with parent</i>	0.906 ***	0.032	0.496	0.889 ***	0.034	0.534
CFI	0.965			0.968		
TLI	0.982			0.983		
RMSEA	0.050			0.056		
$\chi^2$	642.724 ***			544.313 ***		
N	3035			2399		

**Table B.4: Congregational Social Support Measurement Model**

	Coefficient	S.E.	R2
<i>Congregation good place for serious issues</i>	1.000	0.000	0.456
<i>Adults in congregation easy to talk to</i>	0.919 ***	0.053	0.386
<i>Adults in congregation who give encouragement</i>	0.950 ***	0.057	0.411
<i>Congregation is warm and welcoming</i>	0.990 ***	0.056	0.447
CFI	0.995		
TLI	0.989		
RMSEA	0.037		
$\chi^2$	7.525 *		
N	2041		



Figure B.1: Relationship Quality

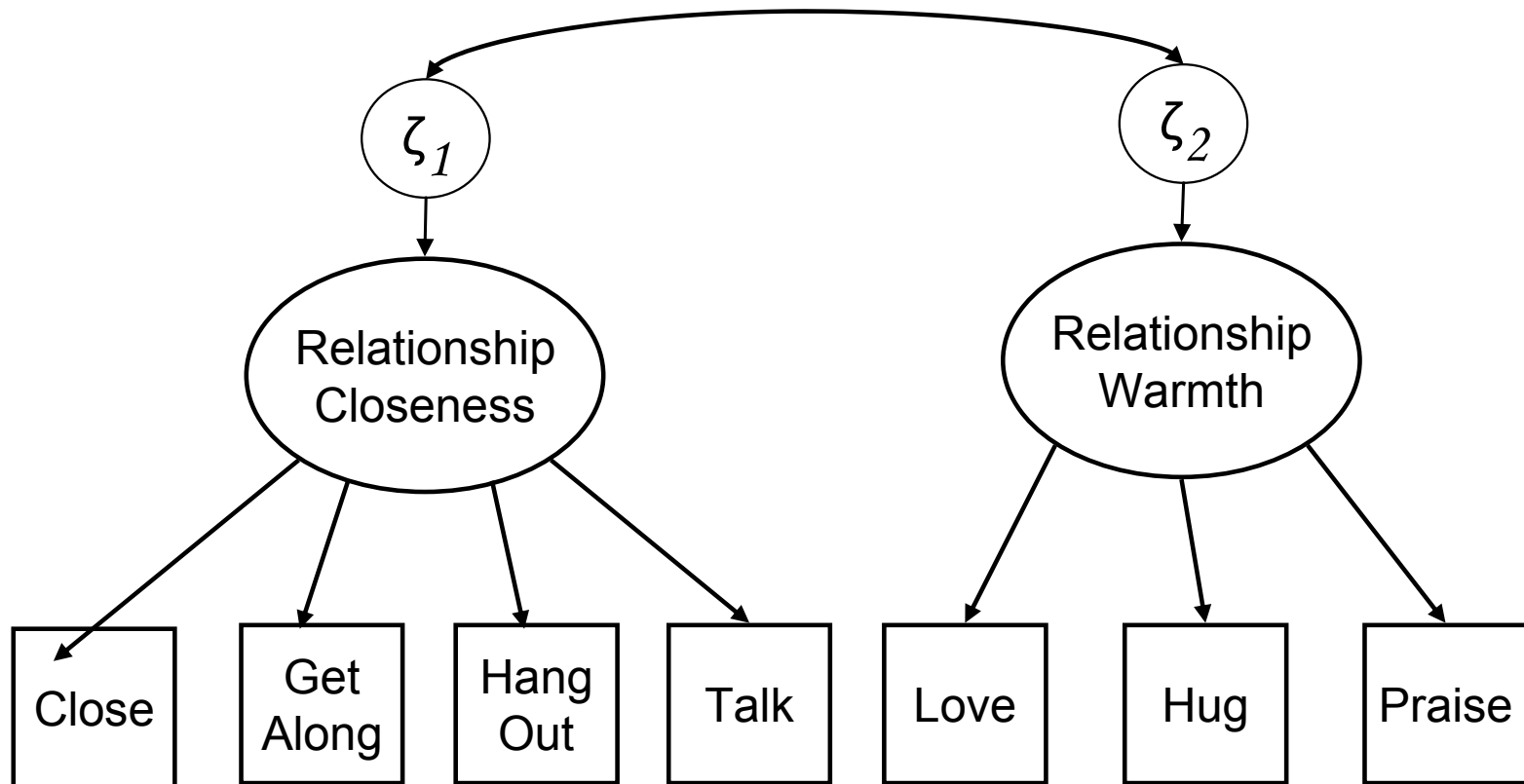


Figure B.2: Adolescent Personal Religiosity

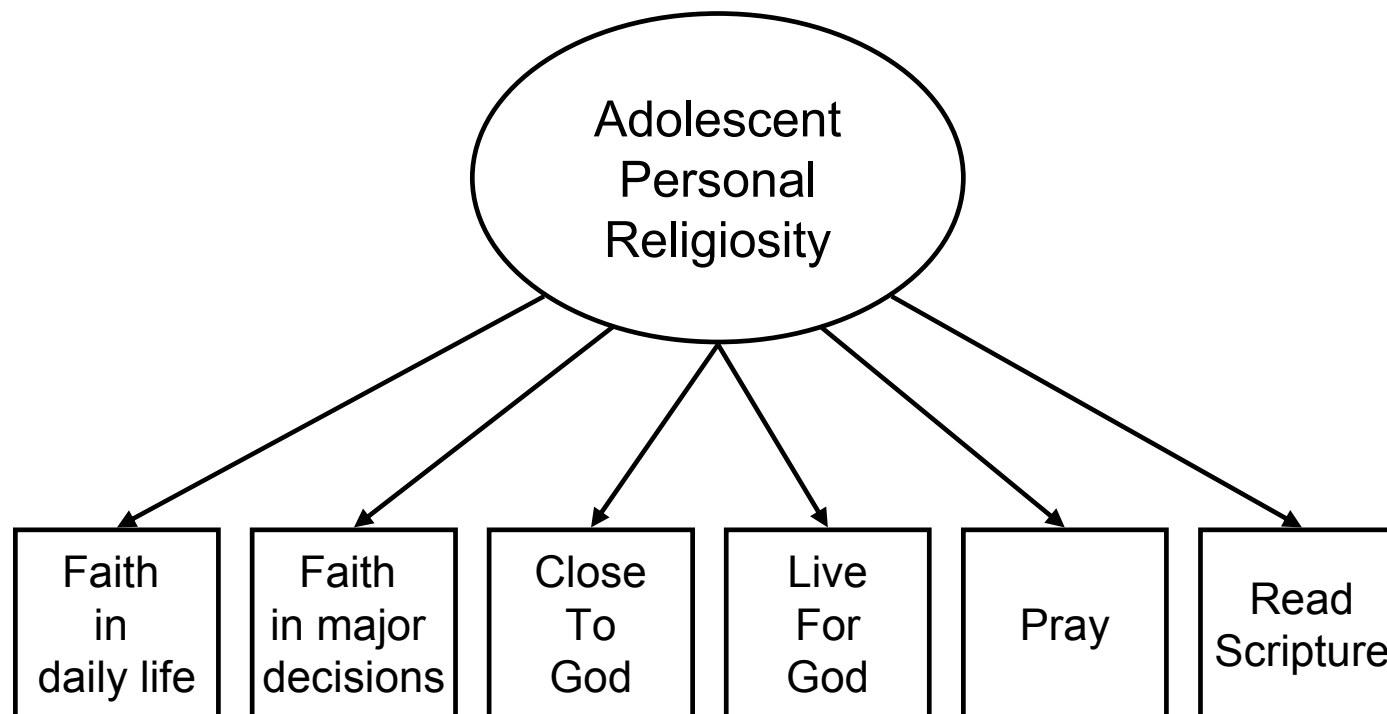


Figure B.3: Shared Religiosity

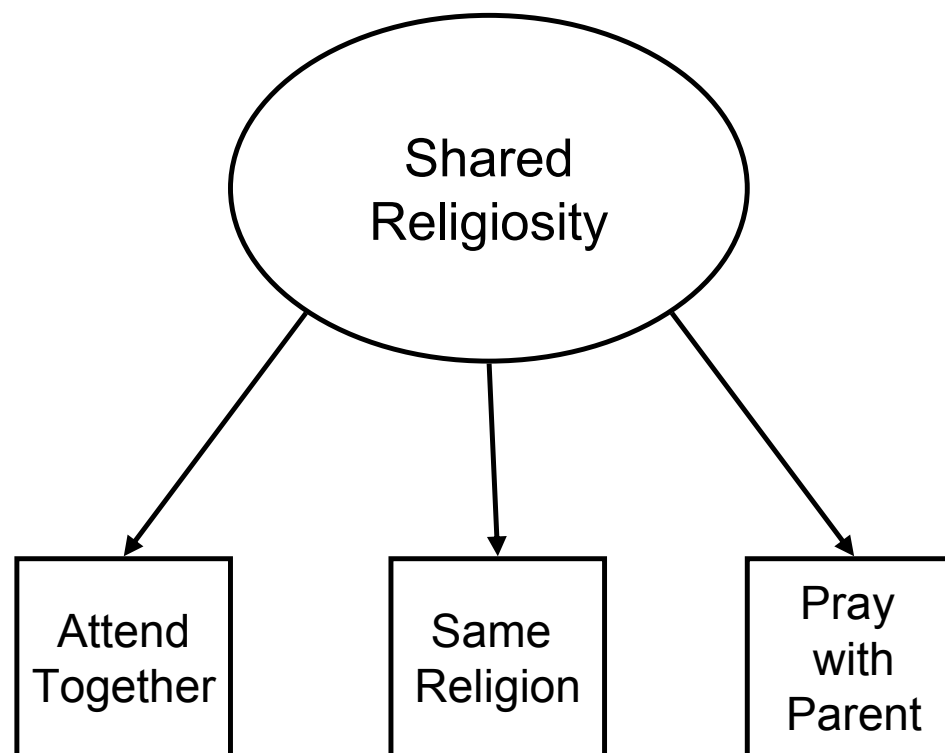
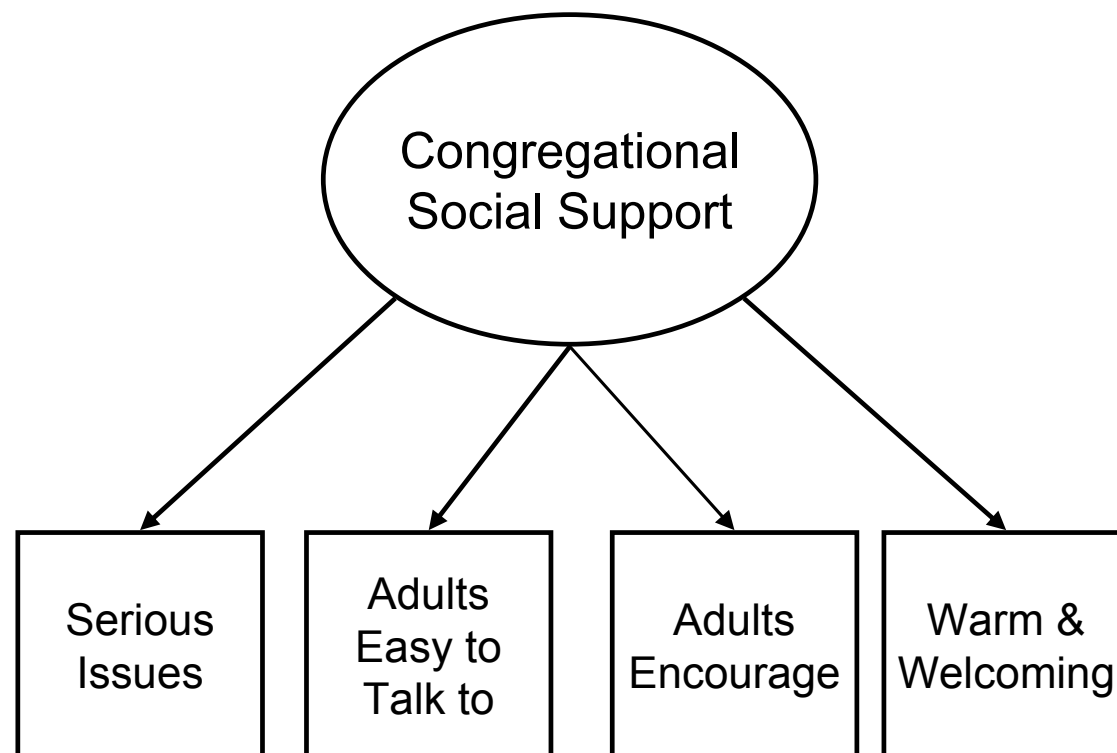


Figure B.4: Congregational Social Support



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